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**Third Generation Narratives of the Holocaust:  
A Narrative Auto-ethnographic Inquiry.**

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**Doctor of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy  
By Professional Studies**

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In memory of my safta and sabba.

For Leo and Phoenix, the fourth generation.

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## ABSTRACT

Much of the previous research into the third generation after the holocaust focuses upon measures of wellbeing and pathology, following the well-established trauma-resilience narrative. This study makes a unique contribution to a more nuanced story of the on-going impact of the holocaust upon the lives of grandchildren of survivors living in the UK. This narrative auto-ethnographic study incorporates the author's third generation voice along with four culturally-similar others. Data collection was carried out during a three part focus group, and presented in the study as narrative representations. A thematic analysis produced eight main themes derived from the data revealing a sustained impact of the holocaust upon grandchildren of survivors that is varied, encompassing experience that is positive as well as 'burdensome' upon their lives.

The individual differences expressed within this study suggests that the third generation varies widely in the ways in which they relate to their family history. A previously assumed direct relationship between conscious knowing and greater resolution of trauma appears to be complex; the narratives expressed in this study suggest that it is not *what* they know, but what form this knowing takes that is most central to their experience, and that there are inherent conflicts to be managed with either knowing or not knowing about ones history. In the discussion of this study, the strong emotions expressed by third generation survivors are linked to human survival adaptations that are inherited from their families. Rather than the trauma itself, it is these strategies that are 'taught'. The third generation co-participants involved in this study expressed an acute awareness of their own 'responsibleness' in the world, with a strong sense of purpose, meaning and identity as emerging positive impacts from their holocaust histories, accompanied by a focus upon regeneration and growth. A sense of belonging and community are discussed as potential protective factors for the third generation.

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## **(1) INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction to the Subject Area**

Inter- or trans- generational trauma (IGT) from political violence is now a widely accepted phenomenon within the academic literature, as well as within the clinical practice of psychological therapists. There is agreement between the varied fields of history, sociology, biology, spirituality, psychology and psychoanalysis that traumas experienced by an individual or by a collective group, can be passed between generations through interpersonal and biological processes to exert influence on the lives of individuals or groups who are born years after the original event (Fonagy et al, 1998; Thompson, 2007; Coles, 2011; Bygren et al, 2014; Mayer, 2014; Salberg & Grand, 2017). Whilst research into IGT began in earnest by examining the psychosocial impacts of the European Jewish holocaust upon the second generation (Rashkin, 1999; Adelman, 1995; Auerhahn & Laub, 1998), systematic research has been conducted *across* cultures with descendants of the Japanese internment in the US (Negata, 1991); of Aboriginals in Canada (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004; Chief Moon Riley et al, 2019); of refugees living in Sweden; (Doud et al, 2005); of survivors of the Cambodian Khmer Rouge (Rubin & Rhodes, 2005; Kidron, 2012), and survivors of the South African Apartheid (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012) amongst many others.

Psychology's founding fathers were aware that personal and ancestral memory could be passed on through some field of energetic interconnection (Sills, 2009). Freud (1916) called it the "collective mind"; Jung (1913) spoke of the "collective unconscious" and Moreno spoke of the "co-conscious" and the "co-unconscious" (Moreno, 1987). Despite their theoretical differences, all were in agreement that the wider intersubjective world in which the individual self develops extends far beyond the limits of space and time (Schützenberger, 1998).



## **Temporal/Cultural Context for This Research**

The movement towards a socio-historical view of the self is demonstrated by recent popular interest in family history in the United Kingdom. Successful television shows such as the BBC's "Who do You Think you Are?" in which celebrities are guided on a detailed genealogical journey into the previously unknown stories of their ancestors, often with a far-reaching emotional impact on the individual as they learn about the lives of their relatives, demonstrates the current zeitgeist in which one's ancestral history is valued as important to know about. The success of genealogy companies such as Ancestry.com testify to the widespread interest in 'where we come from' as a way to further understand, 'who we really are.' The relative ease with which records, genetic testing and online databases can now be accessed contributes to the popularity of the modern 'genealogy project' (Nicolson, 2018). Writing about her own family research, British psychologist Nicolson (2018: 32) states that: "Through looking at our family origins we can now extend the project of the self and take in historical, cultural and biological evidence to enhance the narrative".

Situated within this transgenerational turn (Salberg, 2017), this study offers a particular lens upon the narratives of adults living in the UK whose grandparents survived the Jewish holocaust during the Second World War.

## **Situating the Research within Theory**

Trauma theorists have long put forward the idea that trauma overwhelms an individual's threshold for what can be remembered, and later thought about in the usual ways. Groundbreaking works from Judith Herman (1997) illuminated how an event or a series of events can be experienced by an individual as too threatening to be processed, symbolized and integrated into existing schemata so the individual becomes stuck in a repetitive replaying of the trauma in images, behaviors, feelings, physiological states, and interpersonal relationships. Experiences that could not be symbolized often continue to impact the individual somatically in split-off states, as the body remembers (Rothschild,

2000), and can be expressed as enactments in a person's interpersonal relationships (van der Kolk, 2007). This new model of trauma included the presence of such complex and endemic post-traumatic stress in generations born subsequent to the original trauma, thus also presenting a model of trauma transmission (Herman, 1997; Wesly-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

### An Integrative View of the Mechanisms of Trauma Transfer

Modern literature has discussed and explored several mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of trauma including genetic memory (Bierer et al, 2014; Yehuda et al, 2005, 2015; Faraji et al 2018); parenting style (Siegal, 1999; Brothers, 2014); the unconscious depositing of a representation of the trauma by one or both parents in the hope it will be one day be resolved by the child (Volkan & Vamik, 1998); repression and concealment of events experienced by the family or society as too shameful to be articulated (Rashkin, 1999); or as a wounding of the 'family soul' (Moreno, 1987; Broughton, 2010).

Over the past decade discussion has focused upon the bonding system as the main mechanism by which trauma can be transferred from parent to child (Ruppert, 2008; Salberg & Grand, 2017). Parent-infant research has bloomed, evidencing that brain growth is dependent upon interactions with available care-givers (Trevvarthen, 1993; Schore, 2001). When the parent is traumatized, and therefore unavailable to their infant, their state of mind escapes into the mind of the child as 'ghosts in the nursery' (Fraiberg 1975; Fonagy, 2002). Psychotherapist Prophecy Coles (2011: 76) writes: "It is in this way that the adult survivor, unwittingly and unconsciously, traumatizes his child in infancy."

Epigenetic expert Rachel Yehuda offers the term 'environmental resilience' to describe the biological process by which genes in an unborn baby are altered – most commonly by a process called DNA methylation that blocks proteins from attaching to a gene, suppressing

its expression - so that they are adapted to whatever adverse circumstances their parents experienced. The children of mothers who experienced the 9/11 terror attacks in New York, for example, were born with a primed stress-response that is activated more quickly and easily in response to stress in their own lives (Yehuda et al, 2016). Other research has investigated the way in which a father's sperm microRNA content is altered by paternal stress exposure, with the effect of reprogramming the offspring HPA stress axis regulation (Rodgers et al, 2013). And so the 'un-thought knowns' (Bollas, 1987) that are never sewn into the family's narrative tapestry continue to reside within an individual's body and mind.

I consider an integrative, multidimensional view of the transmission of holocaust trauma to be of most use, to include psychodynamic, sociocultural, family system and biological points of view (Kellerman, 2001; Danieli, 2016).

#### The Role of Narrative in the Transmission, Healing and Study of IGT

There is wide spread agreement that generations born following massive cultural and political trauma, suffer from the disruption – and far too often – the destruction – of their people's story (Woolner, 2009). Speaking particularly of Aboriginal communities in Canada, Woolner (2009) witnesses that massive violence, compounded by collective forgetting and silencing of Aboriginal voices, has led to a fragmentation and breaking of the Aboriginal's own narratives, impacting on the mental and physical health of current generations. It has been found that in South Africa too, the generation known as the 'born-free' born after the end of apartheid, actually carry burdens caused by disruption and discontinuities of narrative and identity, along with implicit knowledge of their people's traumas (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012).

Many survivors of the Jewish holocaust bore their pasts in silence, like shameful secrets that might contaminate their children if they were to be spoken of (Adelman, 1995). Some

children of survivors told how the silence erected a 'wall between the generations' (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004). Experts have suggested that it was via this void, that the horrors of the Holocaust remained inscribed on the individual bodies and minds, and how they were transferred into subsequent generations (Mucci, 2013).

There is now an identified need amongst second and third generation descendants of mass trauma to make sense of their own experiences through construction of a narrative (Connolly, 2011). In studies that have implemented story-telling workshops, building a narrative of IGT from the holocaust amongst the second generation has been described as a form of 'working through' in which an individual "can learn to live with a painful past in ways that are more conscious, less threatening, and less self-destructive" (Bar-On and Kassem, 2004: 293).

Speaking directly of the third generation after the holocaust, Gradwohl Pisano (2013: 177) suggests that the act of narrating an evolving narrative is in and of itself a demonstration of progress: "The intimate disclosures of individual feelings, memories and beliefs cultivate the narrator's sense of self and simultaneously integrate the past, present and future..... It is through verbalizing, sharing and grappling with her own representations that the narrator discovers such activities to be increasingly bearable, and increasingly necessary."

The central role of narrative in both the transmission and processing of inter-generational trauma has contributed to my choice of a narrative, auto-ethnographic methodology. I choose to narrate this research project in the first person as I embark on a personal *and* academic journey.

### **Contribution to Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy**

There is a growing movement in academia towards more nuanced ways of understanding the complexity of social and historical contexts, such as the framework of intersectionality,

which takes into account historical as well as current systems of oppression and privilege (Shin et al, 2017). Within the modern day fields of counselling psychology and psychotherapy, however, the study of historical or intergenerational trauma has been described as nascent (Danieli, 2007; Goodman, 2013). At the current time, intergenerational trauma or historical trauma as it is sometimes referred to, is not yet documented in any official handbook or diagnostic reference guide (Mayer, 2014). This research exists as part of a larger 'paradigm shift' in which clinicians and researchers are moving to consider how an individual's ancestral history can make a meaningful contribution to addressing their current day conflicts in therapy (Halasz, 2017).

Rachael Peltz (2017: 101) remarks that: "We all carry history in our bones. But if it remains only in our bones, we are more likely doomed to repeat it." Psychological therapists must therefore go beyond the current trauma terminology to consider what is transmitted between generations and how a client might be impacted by events that they did not experience first-hand. If the therapist can bear witness to the intergenerational narrative present within their clients' lived experience, often presented only implicitly and indirectly (Coles, 2011), then the client can be supported to build continuity of identity and story, and further unconscious transmission might even be prevented (Mucci, 2014).

### **The Need for a New Third Generation Narrative**

Most of the previous research looking at the third generation of holocaust survivors comes from a positivist framework, with third generation members being compared to control groups on various measures of wellbeing versus pathology (Sagi-Schwartz et al, 2008; Rosenaft, 2014). A new narrative that is emerging within the literature is one that includes the development of coping skills, resilience and good functioning amongst the post-holocaust generations (Bar-On, 1995; Kellerman, 2001; Boulanger, 2005; Sagi-Schwarz, 2008; Giladi & Bell, 2013; Abraham, 2014). A framework is needed for psychological

therapists to consider IGT not only as the transmission of pathology such as complex PTSD and insecure attachment patterns, but also of adaptation and survivorship. The old established trauma-resilience narrative is beginning to be replaced by a much more nuanced understanding of lived experience, which allows descendants of survivors to leave behind the 'victim' identity as they opt for more colorful and descriptive language to describe the 'emotional scratches' (Kidron, 2012) left upon them by their ancestors' experiences (Abraham, 2014; Cohen & Morrison, 2017).

### **Introduction to Researcher Context**

My own experience as a grandchild of holocaust survivors is included in this study as I have taken a reflexive position that is integral to the narrative methodology that I have employed (Etherington, 2004). Other major influences upon my life that have led me to carrying out this study include being born into a family that places great value on education. My mother was a school teacher, and she instilled in me a love of reading, which has influenced my choice of narrative as a way to build and impart knowledge. My earliest work experiences in a therapeutic children's home, and then in a community for adults with severe and enduring mental health issues highlighted to me the long term impact of complex, relational trauma. Going on to train as an integrative psychotherapist, I developed my capacity to hold multiple truths, and I learnt that the subjectively storied selves of each client can guide me in how I understand their difficulties, and choose a direction for treatment. Since qualifying, I have gained specialist training and experience in working with mothers in the perinatal period. In doing this rewarding work I find myself placed right at the interface of intergenerational trauma as I meet parents at a transformational time in their own lives, where they are extremely motivated to provide something new and different for their own children. As a parent myself to two boys, I feel deeply committed to understanding my own

intergenerational patterns, as I seek a way to 'unburden' the fourth generation from the grip of our history.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The peculiarities of the Jewish holocaust must stand alone in that any mass human atrocity cannot be compared or generalized to any others; each must be understood for the individual characteristic and circumstances that made it so horrific.

At the same time, this project deals with a phenomenon that is universal in human experience, affecting individuals across cultural and ethnic groupings. As long as human lives are caught up in, or displaced by political violence, it remains essential for clinicians to understand how their clients unique 'ways of being' might be expressions of adaptations to trauma experienced several generations ago.

With the current international refugee crisis, and the re-emergence of extreme ideologies across the world, I believe that the current study can support the work of psychological therapists to reach further in meeting the needs of refugee and survivor families as well as their descendants.

In this study I intend to make accessible to clinicians and other descendants of cultural trauma a view of the obstacles to building a personal narrative, where the common human need to 'look away' from pain and horror acts to cloak ancestral trauma in secrecy and fantasy, which hinders the achievement of a cohesive narrative both outside and inside the therapy room (Connolly, 2011). This process has been present in my writing of this study, as I move in and out of being more or less able to look at this area and at myself.

## **Research Question**

This study is an exploration of how grandchildren of holocaust survivors living in the UK have been busy finding their third generation voices. Therefore, my research will attempt to answer the question: “How do third generation survivors of the holocaust construct their narratives?”



## **(2) AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

A deep desire to explore my own experience as a grandchild of holocaust survivors drew me to this research. Early on whilst designing this study I realised that including my own story would allow me to take an insider position with transparency and reflexivity. Autoethnography is a narrative approach to research that aims to understand cultural experience through in-depth description of personal experience. This choice in methodology allowed for my story and the stories of my co-participants to be explored as separate accounts, as well as creating a wider generational and cultural voice. Autoethnography bridges the gap between the individual and cultural realms; between science and the arts, and between rational and transpersonal forms of knowledge. My hope is that this personal and emotive way of including myself has allowed for different forms of 'knowing' to answer my research question. I invite the reader to take meaning from their own subjective impact as they read my story and the stories of my co-participants, as well as through the themes and interpretations that I created in the analysis.

As this research project deals with the long term impacts of racial persecution, I felt that a methodology which would challenge power relations between researcher and those being researched would be most appropriate. Engaging with a process of 'observation of participation' (Tedlock, 1991. 2000) in which researchers critically engage with their own participation within the ethnographic frame was one way in which I addressed power dynamics between myself and my co-participants. I acknowledge the presence and impact of my own narrative within the research process by including myself here, and at other points in the research.

Autoethnography gives voice to individuals and marginalized groups that often have not been heard previously. My research question, which asks how third generation holocaust survivors in the UK construct their narratives, can be most usefully answered by a methodological approach that uses narrative as a means to create knowledge whilst

highlighting how individuals are othered by their cultural and social contexts (Bains, 2007). Within the current temporal context, where we have seen the rise of more hateful and extreme ideologies across the world, and with a process of social polarisation and 'othering' emerging across the political spectrums in the UK during recent years, I believe that the sharing of local stories is a critical way to attempt to break down such divides. In choosing to write autoethnographically, and by giving British third generation holocaust survivors a voice, I hoped to make a meaningful contribute towards current anti-racism dialogue.

I have chosen autoethnography as a narrative form of research, as it has allowed me to embrace story as both the method and phenomena of study (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). I have written in first person, examining my own lived experience in relation to 'similar others' as a way to detect patterns or 'threads' inherent to the third generation as a group (Raab, 2013). I include detailed personal experience, and have attempted to challenge my own assumptions through extensive reflexivity (Ellis, 2013:10). Tedlock (2005:467) describes autoethnography as an "attempt to heal the split between the public and private realms by connecting the autobiographical impulse (the gaze inward) with the ethnographic impulse (the gaze outward)". This movement between inward and outward gazing has supported me to inhabit the position of insider researcher in a transparent way by incorporating my own narrative. Taking such a position in the work allowed me to explore 'how third generation holocaust survivors construct their narratives' by including my co-participants whole narratives, as well as my own subjective responses. I include in this research a snapshot of how my own narrative is constructed as it has twisted, changed and grown during the process of carrying out this research, and continued to develop afterwards.

I agree with Romanysky (2013) that there is no way to step outside from my own subjective experience, no way to stand apart from my own conscious and unconscious 'knowings' and so instead I seek to include my self. Here I try to elucidate my own 'complex ties' to the work (Romanysky, 2013).

### **(3) MY THIRD GENERATION VOICE:**

I do not recall the first time that I learnt about the holocaust; rather it feels like it has been an ever-present backdrop throughout my life. Often only hazy and undefined, at other times sharply focused as central and self-defining, I feel like I am always tethered to this part of my history in a way that is difficult to explain.

I grew up being aware of the skeletal outlines of my grandparents' stories and fascinated by the mystery that seemed to surround their lives. My grandfather's youngest sister Sabina was just seven years old when she was killed by the Nazis. I learnt about her only a few years ago, during the planning stages of writing this thesis. An email arrived in my inbox from my younger sister who works for an internet based genealogy company. Using her knowledge and professional connections she had started exploring the facts of our family history and so we both, in our own separate ways, found ourselves in professions that attempt to answer the question of where we have come from.

As I read the title of the email – 'What we know so far' - my interest pricked and I felt my heart rate increase with excitement. I almost felt disappointed to see that the email contained a poignantly simple list of the names of our grandfather's parents and all eleven of his siblings, alongside the dates that they had been born, and died. The majority of my sabba's family died on the same day, in 1942. I remember it being one of the first times I felt a visceral emotional reaction to my family's history, as my eyes rested on the name of the little girl who had been denied the chance to grow up.

My paternal grandfather (sabba) was born in a rural village in Poland. At the beginning of the Second World War he left behind his newly married wife and the rest of his family to join the Russian communist army – what seemed like his only way of resisting the Nazi forces invading Poland. He hid his Jewish identity from his comrades, and from the Nazi forces that captured him. He was placed in a German Prisoner of War camp where conditions were abysmal and torture was frequent. Following a miraculous escape, he was re-captured and

held in a Nazi labor camp. After liberation he travelled home to his village to discover almost all of his family, including his wife, had been murdered.

After the war ended, with nowhere to go and nobody to go to, my sabba travelled to Italy where he met my grandmother in a displaced persons camp, the equivalent of a modern day refugee camp. My sabba chose never to tell my grandmother about his first wife in Poland; I have always felt saddened by what my sabba had felt unable to share, ever-curious to the reasons behind his silence.

Within the stories that we *were* told, our sabba took up the position of a mysterious, heroic figure. Within my family he was presented as intelligent, a master of languages, humorous, charismatic and kind, but with a fiery temper.

My paternal grandmother (safta) was born in Budapest, Hungary. We have almost no knowledge of her life before the war; her story starts as a nineteen year old girl, forced to work in the launderette of a military hospital in the city. Shortly after the invasion of Hungary, she and her older sister Terry were captured by SS soldiers whilst buying bread on the black market. After their capture the two teenage girls were held in a large warehouse which was unsanitary and overcrowded. A small and random detail that has been preserved and recounted in the story, was that they survived by eating some sugar from the dirty hand of an old woman – a glimmer of sustaining kindness amongst the cruelty. They were eventually released from this warehouse – my mother believes that this was because the transportation to the concentration camps were full - my safta and her sister were lucky. They dyed their hair blonde to conceal their Jewishness and the two girls escaped on foot, crossing the Alps to Switzerland and then to Italy. I have been left with questions and fantasies of how they managed such a journey.

At my Grandparents' wedding in the displaced persons camp, safta wore a borrowed dress with a netted curtain for her veil. They moved to Israel after the war, deciding against

Canada which was my Saba's preference, as my safta said she would never again live in a country that was not Jewish. I realise now how important this decision was in its far-reaching consequences on our family as Canada is a safer country, plagued less by war and existential threat. Had my grandparents made a different decision, our family might have escaped the repeat of trauma through the generations, although I would never have been born... I am born of all this trauma.

As a child, I remember my safta's constant, warbling 'hum' that I took for contentment, as she moved around the kitchen of her 1960s airy and high-ceilinged apartment preparing us home cooked food every day whilst we stayed with her during regular family holidays to Israel. She was small in stature and bent from the shoulders, as though the strain and weight of her life had imprinted upon her body. She smelt overpoweringly of the floral body-creams that she used daily, and the scent would seem to linger on our clothes when we came back to London.

I can visualize the shelves and coffee table of her apartment decorated with relics such as Russian dolls, lace 'doilies' and other reminders of an old Eastern Europe. She cooked us Hungarian dishes that she never sat to eat with us, preferring to hover in-between the table and the kitchen, offering more food, and encouraging everybody to "eat, eat!" although there was always too much. As I reminisce I can feel the cool, tiled floor of her apartment – she would often be afraid that we would get cold if we had bare feet, which was ironic as we were in a hot Middle Eastern climate with little risk of getting cold!

The dark experiences of my safta's youth had not dimmed her capacity to love. She adored and idealised my father, and took great joy in being with us, always crying as we drove out of the carpark of her apartment block as we headed for the airport, looking small and forlorn as she waved us off. Looking back it is difficult for me to find the sharp outlines of her character. This became even truer during her descent into dementia, as she lost more and more of who she was. I have always felt sad about the lost opportunity to know more about her life,

particularly before the holocaust. Surrounding my memories of a sweet and loving old woman, there seems to be a blankness.

When I was approximately fourteen years old, I wrote my safta's story as a school creative writing assignment, using the few facts I knew and embellishing the rest to fill the account with the colour and detail that it was lacking. My quest to tell her story had begun. I felt pride in sharing my assignment with my teacher, as though my safta's resilience and survival was a part of me.

It was around the same time that I began to have a recurring dream in which I am being hunted by Nazi soldiers. An invasion into the ordinariness of my early adolescence, this repeated nightmare carried a sense of dread that seemed to have been grafted onto my unconscious. It was during my early teenage years that my curiosity gradually awakened: what might it actually mean to be the grandchild of two survivors of the holocaust?

This burning inquisitiveness became an insatiable desire to 'know'. Indeed this very research is born of a compelling need to make sense of aspects of my experience which so far remained out of reach. A thirst to know and to narrate my grandparents' survival was accompanied by an even greater quest to outline my own story. At times I have felt as persistent, tenacious and resolute in my search for self, as the sinister forces that hunted me in my dreams. And always, just as I awoke mere moments before I am caught, I had not been able to grasp hold of any satisfying truths. I found this process mirrored in my earliest attempts to pin down a research question for the current study: just as I felt closer to expressing what it was that I wanted to explore, I could not find the words.

In the dream, I am standing alongside my family in the entranceway of a neighbors' house on the suburban street in which I grew up. I do not know why we are not in our own home, but the effect of this minor displacement is that of being in a parallel reality of some kind. I am aware of my sisters' and parents' presence, which offers no comfort as we do not

communicate, connected only by silent panic. We are hiding. Fear grips my body; my heart races and my jaw clenches tightly so that no sound comes out. The soldiers are searching house after house at the far end of the street I imagine that this time, we might be found. I am frozen in those last few moments as they begin to break down the door.

My grandparents had arrived in a fledgling Israeli state in 1948, where the painful pasts of immigrant Europeans were seen as shameful and weak. The word 'sabrá,' a thorny desert plant, which is soft inside its tough protective outer-casing, was commonly used to describe young Jewish men who were tough and hardy, able to build and protect a new nation. Survival meant leaving behind their disturbing and traumatic pasts that nobody wanted to hear about in this 'brave new world'. It was in this milieu that my father grew up, and learnt to manage his own life experiences and military trauma. He learnt from his parents, that to survive meant to cut off from his vulnerability. To us, his family, he had a frustratingly rigid sense of his own invincibility. This did not stop my father from being warm and playfully present, but it maintained an impenetrability and an inaccessibility that gave the prick of rejection.

And so in less tangible ways, his injuries were present for me too, mainly in the form of his emotional absence. Parts of him seemed shut off, and I felt shut out. He left most of the parenting work to our mother, and he worked hard at his business. He expressed his love through affection and generosity, supporting us with our aspirations as we grew older. At other times he was easily angered, revealing an explosive temper and a sharp tongue when we dared to express an opinion that clashed with his own.

Since I can remember, I have known a fearful expectation of pending catastrophe; a certainty that at some unknown moment the rug will be pulled out from under my feet. This

has led to a constant sense of hypervigilance; a sense that anything could go wrong and an exaggerated sense of my mistakes, as I imagine that one small trip-up could end in a tragic mess. All mis-happenings whether big or small, served as evidence of this fait accompli. My anxiousness to avoid catastrophe can become a pre-occupation that clouds my experience, as part of me is always on alert. I still have to work hard to re-focus my lens from disaster-aversion, to living more fully in the present.

My inclination towards expecting the worst is particularly and acutely sensitized to perceiving antisemitism, as though we Jews must always be ready. As an undergraduate university student on a campus where public abhorrence for Israel was popular and widespread, I felt compelled to speak up about the complex situation in the Middle East, feeling an obligation to put across the 'other side.' At a time where I might have been otherwise occupied with exploring student life, I found myself straddling a vulnerable position of indignant anger, and shame. I feel both blighted and blessed by my courage to always try and speak up for what I believe. My over-active defense system seems to come hand in hand with a tendency to stand up against injustice, and so I feel proud of this double-edged sword. I believe that my family trauma has made me both a 'worrier' and a 'warrior' in equal measure.

A poem written for me by one of my psychotherapy training peers, describes both my "fighting spirit" as well as the "scars of vulnerability" that have been handed down through the generations and I remember feeling deeply seen by her recognition of these two parts of my inheritance.

Growing up in my family, I felt compelled to shine a light on whatever everybody else wanted buried. My personal quest to pull ghosts from their shadowy hiding places was not always appreciated, as the family status quo was generally one of avoidance. Training as a psychotherapist and counselling psychologist gave this part of myself a home. As I have gained experience as an integrative psychotherapist, I have honed this inclination to feel



deeply as a skill, to help my clients to compassionately know their shadow sides, to help them accept their 'thoughts unknown' (Bollas 1987) and to build a conscious narrative. I believe that I owe my ability as a therapist, in part, to the generations of trauma that reside in my genes.

When I married my husband we double-barreled our names. Not only did it feel antiquated and rather un-feminist to take my husband's name I was also conscious of my sabba's unlikely survival and, as one of three daughters, I felt some responsibility to the survival of his name. I did not consider at the time what other 'hurts' I was holding onto, and how imbedded I am in preserving not only the family name, but also the family wounds.

When my husband and I were deciding whether or not to circumcise our first son, a central and often unquestioned part of the Jewish faith, our hesitancy caused a terrible conflict between my father and I. Sitting down for the weekly Sabbath meal at my parents' house when I was heavily pregnant with my first-born son, I explained to my parents that my husband and I were in turmoil over whether or not to circumcise our son, as we felt it was irrelevant to our lives as non-practicing, secular Jews. My father became angry, and I remember hearing his words: "You must respect the wishes of the parents" and I looked at him, shocked, replying: "But we are the parents!" Until my son's birth I continued to struggle with the decision of whether or not to go ahead with the circumcision. I questioned whether I wanted to bring him into a culture that demanded his injury as a method of initiation, prolonging another intergenerational cycle of violence. It was difficult to feel that I was disappointing my father, and it was even harder to feel like we were 'dissenters.' I worried that not circumcising him would disconnect him from the Jewish community, as well as set him apart from the family. We did end up circumcising both our first and second born sons and I live with messy and disjointed feelings of guilt, pride, regret and belonging.

### The Research Journey

As I started to think about potential topics for this research project, it seemed to me as though all roads led to one place. I felt the absence of this area in my training, in the literature I had so far accessed, and even in the silences of my personal therapies to date.

My journey through planning and carrying out this research has been messy and disjointed. After giving a presentation on my training course my tutor fed back to me that I was *“hiding behind my family’s big stories.”* I felt myself crumpling down into myself. I felt hurt, and ashamed. I was able, over time, to see my tutor’s benevolent intention to help me better know myself, to separate from my family’s traumas, and reflect more on how my own struggles could shrink in space compared to my father and my grandparents. In my connectedness to the trauma of my family members, I struggled to find the boundary where their experience ends, and mine begins. In the end, her words encouraged me to set out on a different journey, placing more importance on other experiences and aspects of my life. But still, there is a sting when I think of her words, for although I am the product of many experiences and significant relationships, I *am* also my family’s stories – they are a part of me.

My tutor’s words had a deep and lasting impact. In my research journal at the time, I wrote *“Am I hiding? Do I need to put it all aside so I can truly be myself?”* I was pregnant at the time, and in the months that followed I started to disengage with my family history and my identity as a third generation survivor became less central in my mind. I turned away from the project that I had begun to plan, feeling a need to protect myself as well as my baby. My research journal documents this time: *“I want to leave this topic behind. I feel like I am only grasping at shadows, hit with blank walls and stuckness. I am afraid that if I stubbornly continue, I will get burnt”*. My fear of some unknown catastrophe now seemed to live within the topic itself, and within my connection to it.

This move away from the research is evidenced in my research journal: I dropped the reading, planning and note making, and after my maternity leave I became busy looking at a different potential project that would explore the experiences of therapists who had recently become mothers. With my own 'maternal pre-occupation' (Winnicott, 1960) in full bloom, this topic felt immediate and relevant, far away from the darkness and trauma, the potential hurt and shaming, and my fears of unacceptability. I embraced the sense of safety from scrutiny that the new project seemed to provide. When my first son was approximately three years old, my Holocaust history slowly began to creep back into my consciousness with a sense of nagging, not dissimilar to how my son might have pulled on my sleeve for attention whilst I was in conversation with someone else. Intergenerational trauma seemed to vie for my attention. Reminders of this topic would appear, for example new research on epigenetics, or a novel written from the third generation view-point, and I felt a longing for my own journey that I had abandoned. I spoke at length with supervisors, colleagues, friends and family members who tried to help me to make sense of this conflict between wanting to go back to my abandoned exploration of third generation experience, versus the safer project that no longer captivated me. So far into the doctorate, to change topics again was hardly pragmatic.

My therapist at that time – a second generation survivor herself - encouraged me to see that the burning fire that once frightened me could also be passion; it could be warming, enlivening and productive. The space and time that I had taken to find a more comfortable distance from the topic of my family history had allowed me to move closer again to engage with my own fiery interest without being so close that I would get burnt.

Throughout my life I have felt a compulsive urge to talk and to write about the Holocaust. It feels like a part of myself that I am proud of, but that I also experience as 'ugly' and so, putting myself within this project, has taken a great deal of courage as I have tried to understand how personal wounds have become bound up with historical, cultural wounds.

The process that has led me to writing this research has been a movement through rigid obsession with the unanswered questions of my family history, to total disengagement, through divisive conflict to a final re-immersion in this subject area. I have attempted to transcribe something of my search to find the 'me' amongst the 'not-me' (Bromberg, 1998, 2011).

At the time of the first focus group, as I began to collect data for this project, I fell pregnant with our second son whom we named Phoenix, after the mythical bird who rises from the ashes. It is traditional in Jewish culture to name a child after deceased and cherished relatives. I think that his name represents well the juxtaposition that I feel as a descendant of survivors; of hope, creation and life, with a never-ending cycle of loss.

#### Ethical Issues of the Insider-Researcher Position:

Describing my relationship to the topic brings ethical considerations directly into play as it is the personal lives and experiences of others in my family, as well as my own, that I have mentioned here. I am unable to consult my grandparents to seek their permission to write their stories, but I balance this ethical dilemma with my own conviction that I add to the legitimacy and legacy of their experience, by engaging with my own story.

As some of the content of this project deals with the unspoken, I considered the impacts upon my family of reading this research, which may bring some 'un-thought knowns' (Bollas, 1987) to consciousness. I explore these ethical dilemmas in detail later in this project, but mention them here as testimony to how this is always present in my mind; a need for respectful consideration of how I allow others to be sensitively present in the project, and for an ongoing process of consent (Josselson, 2013).

#### **(4) A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:**

Here I present a critical review of the literature in which I have moved beyond description of articles to include an analysis of relevance and quality (Grant & Booth, 2009). I have conducted an extensive search, with a wide range of sources. I have used search engines including PEPweb, psycinfo, google, and research gate. I have used 'snowball thinking' in which each reference led to new ideas for further searches. The literature is presented in a narrative format in which the references tell the story of how ideas have developed through the literature, as this method is more coherent with the narrative methodology, rather than a mapping or systematic review (Grant & Booth, 2009). Initially starting with a much broader focus, I decided to exclude more general research on intergenerational trauma across cultures, on the mechanisms of trauma transfer, as well as articles that focus on the second generation as these are already established areas of research, and for pragmatic reasons I have focused on the holocaust and the third generation.

#### **Intergenerational Trauma Research as a Paradigm Shift**

Over the last decade or so, there has been a steady movement within the psychological therapy profession to 'locate social justice at its core' by integrating multigenerational data in diagnosis and treatment (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1980; Salberg and Grand, 2017). Experts in the field encourage clinicians to consider the ways in which sociological and historical events in the past might have had an impact upon the individual psyche, rather than focus solely on the present relationship between patient and therapist (Coles, 2011). It has been suggested that if clinicians do not take an interest in the history of grandparents and great-grandparents, and in particular the traumatic experiences of war, social disruption and ultimately death or abandonment, then an important part of psychic development is neglected (Coles, 2011) and usual interventions in psychotherapy are even likely to fail (Fossoin et al, 2013; Wolynn, 2016).

On the other hand, there appears to be a failure within the therapy professions to adapt to the advances of this research and a delay by professionals to recognize the phenomena of trauma transfer (Halasz, 2017). Experts believe that the peculiarity of the effects of IGT requires therapy professionals to reflect upon their clinical practice, its theoretical and conceptual underpinnings and, if necessary, modify their techniques to meet the particular needs of these individuals (Halasz, 2017).

The therapist has been recognized as central in the process of healing IGT (Weingarten, 2004; Thompson, 2007). Yael Danieli, author of the *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma* (1998); founder and director of the International Center for the Study, Prevention and Treatment of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma and a long-term advisor to the United Nations, suggests that therapy can help an individual to re-establish the sense of integration, rootedness and continuity damaged by IGT (1985b; 1998). She also suggests that building client awareness of transmitted intergenerational processes will inhibit the transmission of pathology to succeeding generations (Danieli, 1985b) and contribute to the stopping of the cycle of violence that is too often produced by transgenerational transmission (Salberg and Grand, 2017).

### **The Psychological Therapist as Impassioned Witness:**

It is within the attachment relationship that trauma is said to be transmitted (Salberg & Grand, 2017), therefore it makes sense that psychological healing from the fragmentation of trauma can occur only in relatedness, and not in isolation (Jacobs-Wallfisch, 2014). This requires a therapist able and willing to attune to the particular dissociations that often manifest in such cases (Hopenwasser, 2017). The therapist must become a 'passionate witness' who is able to accompany an individual on their testimonial journey as a willing and actively curious participant (Garon, 2004; Laub, 2014). IGT is not always overtly present, so

that its working through requires a conscious asking and listening to what is also not said (Davoine, 2014; Mayer, 2014).

Davoine & Gaudilliere (2004: 47) explain that “in order to achieve contact with this ‘cut-out’ unconscious, there must be a willingness to engage in a new sort of language game; a ‘silent language’ in which one’s story is shown, not spoken.”

According to Susan Mayer (2014: 199) the work of the therapist is to “rebuild the empathic bond destroyed by the generational descent of trauma”. This requires the therapist to become the “conduit – open, flexible, and completely connected to the client – without a loss of his or her own creativity, emotional capacity and clarity, and ability for attentiveness.”

Through therapy, individuals can internalise a dialogue with a witnessing other and re-establish the capacity to use metaphor and narrative, thus offering the possibility of repair to the psychic disruption caused by fragmented memories (Connolly, 2011; Laub, 2017). A sense of temporality can be created, so that the individual can acknowledge that “this thing that I remember and dream about really happened but it happened in the past and not to me” (Connolly, 2011: 217).

Clara Mucci (2013: 3) proposes:

“... A kind of psychoanalytic practice capable of bearing witness to what in society is always in danger of undergoing repression and marginalization... fostering a clinical and theoretical activity that includes the interpersonal, the ethical and social, which is therefore situated on the site of testimony, active against the ‘resistance to know’ that is at the foundation of culture.”

For the descendants of holocaust survivors, the opportunity to work through their intergenerational trauma largely depends upon the availability of the therapist to allow him or herself to be reached by the “psychotic universe of the extermination camps” (Gubrich-Simitis, 1984: 313). This engagement evokes intense and emotional strain in the therapist,

and so it is of no surprise that often the therapist and their client make a tacit agreement to look away. Attending to even secondary accounts of trauma can cause intense anxiety and emotional strain in the therapist, known as vicarious traumatization (Hafkenschield, 2005) or secondary traumatization (Scharf, 2007). It is a natural and protective human tendency to look away from horror, which Danieli (1984, 1998) warns is experienced by the client as a further re-traumatization as they find yet another ‘conspiracy of silence’ that mirrors the silence in their own family of origin. If what can be told depends largely on a matching ability to listen and to understand, this experiential gap may well challenge the very possibility of the testimonial endeavor (Bodenstab, 2017).

### **The “Conspiracy of Silence” Amongst Professionals**

It took time for professionals to recognize the unique suffering inflicted by the holocaust (Coles, 2011). A ‘latency period’ referred to by Caruth, (1996) and expanded upon by Faimberg (2005) in her book ‘Telescoping of the generations’ has been defined as the time it took, following the Holocaust, for therapy professionals to face and find a language to express the horror of what happened (Kestenberg and Kestenberg, 1982).

Davies and Szejnmann (2007) refer to a “zone of silence” lasting up to around the 1980s whilst Bergman and Jucovy (1982: 33) refer to a “collective wall of silence” from analysts, psychiatrists, doctors and the general population – in particular a denial of the effect of the holocaust on survivors and their children. The silence of the psychotherapeutic community carried a more general cultural resistance to accept that a trauma might have consequences that could impact subsequent generations (Coles, 2011).

Many of those who survived the camps in Nazi Europe found that there was a cultural taboo on bearing witness to their experiences, both in their new host countries, or in their countries of origins for those that returned. According to Cyrulnik (2005: 170), the deafening silence



that they were met with was interpreted by survivors as: “What happened to you is horrifying and disgusting, so don’t talk about it.” This perceived message was then internalized as – “you are dangerous and disgusting” which could have obvious deleterious effects if this introject was to be passed between generations (Cyrulnik, 2005: 170).

It is important to note, however, that for some survivors silence was a vital strategy that allowed them to deal with life and adapt after the trauma (Fossion et al, 2003). Second or third generation clients in Holocaust survivor families can remain loyal to family/cultural silence (Schutzenberger, 1998). The therapist, therefore, may face many challenges in their intention to open up a creative space in which a history can be explored and known (Mayer, 2014).

## **Second Generation Studies**

In an overview of the second generation research, Kellerman (2001) states that over a period of 3 decades, more than 400 papers were published on the transmission of trauma from holocaust survivor parents to their offspring and that the vast majority of this research used largely clinical populations that were compared to control groups.

Most of these controlled studies failed to confirm the presence of increased rates of psychopathology in the offspring of holocaust survivors (Kellerman, 2001; Cohn & Morrison, 2018). Kellerman’s (2001) overview included clinical observation as well as empirical research, and he found that there are particular areas of disturbance which are more pronounced in this population. These areas are self, cognition, affectivity and interpersonal functioning.

Holocaust survivors have been described as inadequate parents, and that their multiple losses were assumed to create child-rearing problems around both attachment and detachment (Kellerman, 2001). Children of survivors are described as being shaped by a

matrix of unhealthy relationships with their parents “with whom they struggle to maintain their ties and from whom they try to differentiate themselves at the same time” (Kellerman, 2001: 261).

In 1995, the ‘Psychotherapeutic study Group of Persons Affected by the Holocaust’ (PAKH) was founded and communicated their findings that:

“Both victims and perpetrators... unconsciously handed down their unresolved experiences to their children and grandchildren, charging them as surrogates with the task of resolution. These commissions involved ‘undigested’ feelings of mourning, anger, guilt and shame” (Hammerich et al, 2009: 28).

Very few studies refer to the development of unique coping skills within the second generation that better enabled them to deal with their parents’ psychological burden (Kellerman, 2001). Only rarely discussed, are the type of open family discussions, in “non-frightening ways” that allowed for better adjusted and functional children amongst the second generation (Axelrod et al, 1980).

### **Third Generation Studies**

Most third generation studies begin by stating that research into the transmission of trauma to the third generation is scarce, especially in comparison to the volume of research from the first and second generations of holocaust survivors (Scharf, 2007; Lev-Wiesel, 2007; Gradwohl Pisano, 2013). However, the emerging narrative amongst the third generation is that they feel that it has become increasingly imperative for their experiences to be acknowledged and heard (Gradwohl Pisano, 2013; Jilovsky et al, 2016). This has taken place against a societal backdrop where postmodernism in academic research encourages telling of lived experience through story, and there is greater value placed in the gathering of ‘local stories’ such as those included in the current study.

### Transmission of Trauma Related Symptomology

According to Sigal & Weinfeld (1989), grandchildren of holocaust survivors were 300% more likely to present for child psychiatry than other children. One of the first studies to focus solely on the third generation was a pediatric-psychiatric case report published in the United States (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1980). The case study identifies multigenerational processes within the family of a seven year old boy whose emotional and behavioural symptoms, that surfaced suddenly at the age of five and a half when he started kindergarten, led the authors to a diagnosis of a 'confused identification with the paternal grandmother' evidenced by marked similarity in their symptomatology. This 'confused identification' was understood as a consequence of the unspoken holocaust related trauma of the paternal grandmother, and was to become a target of treatment, as he was supported to "become a separate individual in his own right" (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1980: 579).

Sixteen years later Winship & Knowles (1996) refer to the high incidents of pathology and re-enactments in the third generation in their discussion of three case vignettes that presented to a British psychotherapy service. Their rather morbid conclusion that "the depression of the second generation was replaced by anxiety, which caused the third generation survivors to suffer more borderline and serious somatic symptomatology" was balanced with constructive suggestions for a "psychotherapeutic intervention which can act as a *mourning location point*, where pathological organization is superseded by an adaptive (though painful) knowing where the impossibility of mourning can be adumbrated by the capacity to think, remember and work through (making the unconscious conscious)" (Winship & Knowles, 1996: 263-264). This paper considers the effects of the holocaust as clinical symptoms that are inherited, and which can be worked through via conscious mourning of the trauma in therapy.

Katz's (2014) analysis of Talby-Abarbanel's (2011) historical case-study 'The treatment of Ann,' describes how un-metabolised, un-verbalised grandparent holocaust trauma is treated

as central and defining within Talby-Abarbanel's formulation and psychoanalytic treatment of Ann's life-long somatic symptoms and behavioural patterns.

When Talby-Abarbanel eventually put into words for Ann everything that she had come to understand, she provided the experience of bearing witness and integrating rather than dissociating this aspect of her psychic heritage (Katz, 2014). I question this rather reductionist tale of Ann's passivity in the process as an unaware 'carrier' of trauma, with a final scene of resolution when the therapist is able to reflect back for the patient the previously unknown trauma which is then integrated into conscious life (Katz, 2014).

Studies of the grandchildren of holocaust survivors have continued to include a clinical population, hunting for their pathologies, guilt complexes and traumas (Gradwohl Pisano, 2013; Rosenthal, 2014). For example, Fossion et al (2003: 4) present several clinical observations made during family therapy sessions with families of holocaust survivors and reported in their case study: "Fear and anxiety were everywhere, with no room left for creativity." The study also confirms the view often expressed in the second generation literature, that separation-individuation conflicts appeared insoluble for members of the third generation, where saying "I" was felt to be a negation of the family contract, which required saying "We" (Fossion et al, 2003: 4). Striving for a more hopeful and constructive outcome, Fossion et al (2003) recommend that improved knowledge of their family histories can help grandchildren to clarify their own personalities, together with their parents' enhanced autonomy, resulting in a progressive improvement of their symptoms. Furthermore they suggest a role for the third generation in becoming "catalysts of communication" as they were able to break the silence established by their grandparents (Fossion et al, 2003).

### Conflicting Evidence of Trauma Transmission in the Third Generation

In a meta-analysis of the third generation research, Sagi-Schwartz et al (2008) claims that there is no evidence for tertiary traumatization in holocaust survivor families. In their

integrative review and analysis of available studies their selection criteria was broad, including journals, books, dissertations and conference presentations. Whilst there is obvious merit in recognizing the “remarkable resilience of profoundly traumatized survivors in their grandparents roles” (Sagi-Schwartz et al, 2008: 105), and great importance in questioning our acceptance of the third generation as traumatised, there appear to be a number of methodological issues with this meta-analysis. Firstly, a lot of the studies were conducted with third generation members when they were children or adolescents, and often parents were reporting on their behalves. Outcomes from each study included in the meta-analysis were separated in a binary form into positive or negative impacts upon wellbeing, which seems to miss a more nuanced impact of the Holocaust. Also, the findings of this study seem to conflict with the volumes of research that came from the second generation. So whilst Sagi-Schwartz et al (2008) moves on from the established yet reductionist tale of the third generation as ‘less well adjusted’ it seems a far cry from being able to conclude that the holocaust therefore has no impact beyond the second generation. Sagi-Schwartz et al (2008: 107) does admit that “the field still seems to beg for further systematic examination of third generation effects”.

Published and unpublished research over the last two decades has investigated transgenerational transmission of depression, shame and guilt amongst the third generation (Jurkowitz, 1996); the attachment patterns of third generation survivors (Huttman, 2004); along with other comparison studies where third generation survivors are measured against ‘normal’ samples on various psychological dimensions (e.g. Daud et al, 2005; Hever, 2006). Overall the evidence amongst research looking for specific effects of trauma amongst the third generation is conflicting, but would seem that the proliferation of particular trauma symptomatology does dissipate by the third generation (Cohn & Morrison, 2017) calling into question the idea of the transmission of trauma-related pathology.

In a study based in Israel that describes itself as “not a typical trauma-related study” (2007: 606) Scharf considers the over-representation of research findings that indicate psychopathology in the third generation. Recognising that both offspring and grandchildren of holocaust survivors are most often “stable, well-educated people with medium to high socioeconomic status (SES)” Scharf (2007) appreciates that the presence of high-achievement furthers the need for understanding of a more complex and nuanced narrative. In Scharf’s (2007) study investigating the psychosocial adjustment of the third generation participants during adolescence (male only participants aged 17-19), particular interest was paid to coping with separation-individuation which presents at a particular challenge at that time in life. The multi-method design (interviews and questionnaires) included forty seven families where there was holocaust background, and thirty two families with no holocaust background. Adolescents with both parents coming from a holocaust background perceived their parents as less accepting and autonomy granting than did their counterparts. In general, the psychosocial functioning of the third generation where both parents in the family were holocaust survivor offspring was inferior to that of other groups, with the lowest self-perception compared to others. Scharf does admit that the specific Israeli-context, with constant war-related and terror-related threats could restrict its generalizability to more peaceful contexts (Scharf, 2007). In my view this study does not significantly leave the established narrative of a grouping with worsened functioning. In a subsequent study, Scharf and Mayseless (2011) re-attempt to offer an alternative view to the trauma narrative by looking at ‘disorganising experiences’ rather than symptomatology. Their analysis of interviews of 196 second generation survivors and their adolescent children demonstrates the frustration of three basic needs amongst these two generations: competence, relatedness and autonomy (Scharf and Maylesses, 2011). Without any significant shift from the language of psychological wellbeing versus pathology, I do not believe that this research goes far enough to offer an alternative view as the authors set out to, with most of the

literature still emphasising the 'victim' aspect of descending from Holocaust survivors (Abraham, 2014).

I agree with Bar-On et al (1995) that whilst categories of wellbeing and pathology may have served clinicians in making diagnoses, choosing type of therapy and evaluating the prognosis, these categories might be limiting rather than helpful in developing our understanding of intergenerational effects of the holocaust.

### Vulnerability and Resilience in the Third Generation

As the grandchildren of holocaust survivors have grown into adults, they are described in the literature as wanting to be successful in what they do, having great amounts of empathy, the tendency to be associated with the helping professions, and as being motivated by their desire to pass on the story of the holocaust to future generations (Giladi & Bell, 2013). Other studies describe grandchildren of holocaust survivors as having good socio-economic status and a positive self-perception (Chaitin, 2002; Scharf, 2007; Illiceto, 2011). Some researchers go one step further to interpret the high-achievement amongst this group as indication of successful integration of the trauma (Abraham, 2014).

Bar-On's (1995) multigenerational study of holocaust survivor families living in Israel introduces the concept of the 'working through process' within the third generation to include five basic stages:

1. Knowledge: An awareness of what happened during the Holocaust and if their family was involved, what happened to them at that time.
2. Understanding: The ability to place knowledge of the facts within a meaningful, historical, social or moral frame of reference.

3. Emotional response: The emotional reaction to this knowledge and understanding. In Israel typically anger, fear, shame and pride. Anger usually towards the “world that stood aside”; fear “it could happen again”; shame (the degradation, fact that people did such things) and pride (for remaining humane, for fighting back).
4. Attitude: toward what happened based on this knowledge, understanding and emotional response and their implications for present and future.
5. Behaviour: Specific behavior patterns based on the effect of knowledge, understanding and response.

These five stages give a normative, universal journey that can be progressed through or disrupted, on the way to greater integration and healing. The narrative methodology employed in the study allowed, however, for findings that were not limited to categories of wellbeing and pathology; for example the finding of a “positive achievement-oriented response” – a kind of over-response, due to the fact that these were descendants of holocaust survivors, and thus showed better ability to cope with current problems” (Bar-on et al, 1995: 25). Another interesting finding was that the way in which individuals define their family experience in the holocaust depends upon their sense of legitimacy given to their own experiences and feelings, revealing a more systemic view of individual differences in the third generational story (Bar-On et al, 1995).

The discourse has since widened over the last decade to consider individual difference amongst survivor families; in particular, potential protective factors. For example, Giladi & Bell (2013: 384) found that greater differentiation of self and better family communication was associated with lower levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), suggesting a mixture of resilience and vulnerability factors.

Many studies looking at identity narratives of the third post-holocaust generation have described a “sense of mission” to continue Jewish existence which can also be understood



as expressions of resilience and survivorship (Lev-Wiesel, 2007). This sense of mission was present in all interviews conducted in a study by Rezke (2013) looking at the third generation of Jews living in Poland. Interviewees described their sense of mission to pay tribute to the past by creating a present and a future (Rezke, 2013). The traumatic past of the holocaust is actively drawn on to create meaning and a sense of purpose in the lives of the third generation.

Salberg and Grand (2017: 1) state that “this universal idea of mission awakes us to something that had been missing from the trans-generational literature; the transmission of strength, resourcefulness and resilience, that operates in tandem with the transmission of wounds.” Lehrner & Yehuda (2018) emphasize the importance of viewing biological findings (trauma symptomatology) as flexible adaptations to stressors rather than deterministic indicators of damage.

Such ‘new narrative possibilities’ for the third generation are explored in Nirit Gradwohl Pisano’s (2013) book entitled “Never forgetting what they didn’t experience”. This is a narrative study of granddaughters of survivors that differs to the current study in the absence of male participants, its setting in the US and in its reliance on individual interviews only as a method of data collection. The research is also located within a trauma-theory, psychodynamic framework and does not include in depth examination of the researcher’s own experience.

I believe that the book is groundbreaking, however, in its rich exploration of individual differences amongst the third generation. Without making any sweeping generalisations, Gradwohl Pisano (2013) does insist that the ‘trail of trauma’ is present in each and every granddaughter’s narrative, embedded in their day-to-day lives, whether conscious or unconscious. In their interviews many of the granddaughters expressed that it is their function to continue or even to complete the feeling work that remains to be done to unlock the intergenerational trauma. It appears that grandchildren are able to initiate new narrative

possibilities amongst family members, breaking down the double wall of silence created by survivors and their children:

“Having a place to explore and symbolize their experience... allows third generation survivors to promote connection and growth within their families, to discover words that might heal the torment of unexpressed emotions and dynamics, and to honor their history while re-working its previously debilitating impact.” (Gradwohl Pisano, 2013: 45)

The outcome of the study is a hopeful one, with the third generation represented as potentially being active agents in their connection to their family’s holocaust pasts. This finding appears to corroborate with Rosenthal’s (2010) multi-generational study conducted with twenty families in Israel and eight families in Germany where at least one grandparent had survived the holocaust. Narrative-biographical interviews were conducted with at least one member of each generation in every family studied. Rosenthal (2010: 7) re-frames intergenerational trauma as:

“An interactive-intergenerational concept which does not view the second and third generations as passive recipients of the past, but rather as active agents in the way they dealt with their parents and grandparents and their pasts.”

Gradwohl Pisano (2013: 176) further develops this idea of the third generation as active agents in their engagement with their historical pasts:

“As long as the offspring of survivors attempt to cut off their connection to intergenerationally transmitted trauma, they will undoubtedly be owned by residues of the past. Conversely, the study of meaning, the acknowledgement, exploration and working through of trauma, will allow granddaughters and future descendants of the holocaust to own their histories and further integrate their identities.”

She warns, however, that the third generation often appear very successful but that their emotional lives are disordered (Gradwohl Pisano, 2013: 179). She recommends that

adaptability is not to be confused with resilience! I would agree that the appearance of high functioning can hide concurrent vulnerabilities, and it seems an over-simplification to view external achievements as an indicator of greater resolution of trauma.

Researchers have begun to use more normalizing language to describe what has been transmitted between the generations, such as “emotional scars as a mode of being” (Kidron, 2012; Abraham, 2014). Even the silence which has been assumed to be the conduit of trauma itself is reframed as a strength in their parents and grandparents (Abraham, 2014). In her review of the third generation literature, Abraham (2014: 17) suggests that: “What is transmitted for the majority is not a disorder or vulnerability, but different coping methods and a resilient family narrative... The importance of integrating the two narratives as normative is perhaps one of the biggest tasks in healing trauma.”

This more rounded view of the third generation is expanded upon by Felsen (2018) in her article on sibling relationships in holocaust survivor families, where, in her review of the literature, she argues that vulnerabilities appear in particular areas of the lives of children of survivors despite concurrent good functioning in other areas. Both strengths and vulnerabilities within holocaust families can be seen as adaptational styles that are not necessarily pathological, but rather reflect personality organization and individual ‘ways of being’ in the world (Felsen, 2018). The article concludes that siblings in holocaust families vary widely not only in their individual susceptibility to the suffering of their parents, but also to “enhancing, resilient and protective factors” (Felsen, 2018: 434). Most significantly, Felsen (2018) suggests that the transmission of effects related to the holocaust is manifested in the arena of subjective, phenomenological experience and within the relationships of (grand)children of holocaust survivors. This has contributed to my own sense of what is missing in the literature; rich individual narratives that illustrate lived experience for grandchildren of holocaust survivors

### Questioning the Trauma-Resilience Narrative in the Third Generation

Written from an anthropological perspective, Kidron (2012) questions the established Euro-Western trauma-resilience narrative. In his research study, interviews were conducted with children of survivors of the holocaust living in Israel as well as with children of survivors of the Khmer Rouge Cambodian genocide living in Canada. Participants in both groups largely rejected the pathologising construct of transmitted post-traumatic stress disorder (Kidron, 2012). Kidron (2012: 725) criticizes the PTSD construct as a culture-specific idiom and he questions “whether descendants are not being subjectified as victims of a distant past.” He goes further to explain how even ideas of resilience as immunity to trauma, plays into the same Euro-Western constructs of trauma victimhood, working through and healing (Kidron, 2012). The study recommends that other researchers move beyond the question of pathology and resilience into more subtle forms of emotive experience (Kidron, 2012: 739).

From face-to-face interviews with Australian grandchildren of holocaust survivors, Cohn & Morrison’s (2017) phenomenological study uses normalizing language that stays close to the participants’ own words in their findings that the identities of grandchildren continue to be profoundly informed by their identification with familial narratives of trauma, despite their generational distance from the holocaust. Whilst not searching for any particular symptomatology as many previous studies were, the authors admit that “typical patterns of hyper-vigilance and avoidance were universally spoken of alongside experiences like nightmares” (Cohn & Morrison, 2017: 7). It is important to note that, despite not looking for symptoms of trauma, they were present nonetheless as part of a much wider narrative.

Contrary to second generation findings, Cohn and Morrison (2017) found that their third generation participants’ engagement with their grandparents’ stories was mostly self-initiated, marked by personal research, judicious reflection and trips to holocaust sites. The third generation was not found to be a homogenous group, rather each individual is heavily influenced by his or her active connection with the holocaust.

The emerging narrative from the third generation research is one of empowerment and agency over their legacies. It would appear that it is the third generations' own willingness to engage with their 'self' in the present is a key factor to being able to recognize the impact of their histories (Gradwohl Pisano, 2013).

To conclude, most third generation studies reveal that the participants' holocaust history has been formative in their own lives, with echoes of their grandparents' trauma shown to reverberate loudly throughout various elements of their experience and identities (Pisano, 2013; Cohn & Morrison, 2017).

### Creativity and the Third Generation

In the current study, I join Rosenaft (2014) in asking:

"Could there be more to the narrative of descendants of the holocaust than pathology and mal-adjustment? Could it be that some have managed to re-channel the sadness, anger and inherited memories into humanistic endeavors or creativity? – Can we write of this part too?" (Rosenaft, 2014: xxiv).

The voice of the third generation can recently be heard in the form of 'aesthetic' mediums such as art and literature (Rosenaft, 2014; Toll, 2018). In a collection of essays, third generation author Anthony Levin (2016: 175) movingly writes:

"I do not know if 'transmission' is the right word for this, or if it is, what exactly is transmitted. I prefer to think of it as living in the aura of trauma, since it conveys a sense in which something personal is shared without necessarily existing physically in space-time as we know it. If only because it makes sense of what is senseless, I must make room for such mysteries – for the host of mirror-effects hidden deep within the cells, which call to one another as relatives call to each other separated in a crowd, issuing songs from the heartfelt regions of sound that penetrate darkness and trial, each note inscribed with the distinctive

timbre of a family's survival. Calls that connect mother to child, the very lineaments of love rendered in supernatural filigree."

Eva Fogelman (2008a, 2008b) has also written extensively about the creative outpouring emerging from female descendants of holocaust survivors, which, in her view, becomes an alternative to the emotionally debilitating transmission of trauma. Fogelman (2008b) describes creativity as the final stage of mourning, as meaning is searched for amongst the legacy of loss. Elsewhere Fogelman (2008) has suggested that:

"A paradigm shift has occurred from Second to Third-Generation. As the world has validated the suffering and resilience of the holocaust survivors, the central dynamic has shifted from shame to pride."

It is of little surprise that social researchers are also turning to more creative forms of knowledge production when exploring intergenerational trauma. I found one existing autoethnography written from the third generation viewpoint, using 'art response' as a way to represent the author's experience (Toll, 2018). Acknowledging that her historical family trauma feels too vast and difficult to describe only with words, Toll (2018: 4) uses artmaking as a tool for "knowing myself and processing the world around me in conscious and unconscious ways, extending beyond verbal capacity and linear thinking." Similarly, I have written the current study using personal narrative as a medium that might translate my own and my participants' stories; as a way to impart experience when words are simply not enough.

### **My Contribution to the Field of Counselling, Psychology and Psychotherapy:**

It is still rare to find ethnographic research on the life-worlds of descendants of survivors of the holocaust (Kranz, 2016). A need has been highlighted for re-examination of the possible factors that support resilience, recovery and regeneration amongst the descendants of those who have experienced extreme human perpetrated mass traumatization (Felsen, 2018). Amongst their recommendations for further research Felsen (2018: 441) highlights a need to understand the “psychological trade-off” involved in reintegrating after extreme genocidal catastrophe.

Research concerning the third generation and their legacy is in its beginning stages, and with hardly any dialogue in mainstream clinical trainings about the implications of the holocaust, it still seems to be a taboo subject amongst psychologists and psychotherapists (Houston 2016; Zaslowski, 2016).

With epigenetic and neurological knowledge expanding quickly, I believe that there is great need for qualitative, in-depth accounts to accompany it. A very recent study presented to the European Congress of Neurology (Konekna et al, 2019) demonstrated long-term changes in the brains of holocaust survivors such as decreased grey matter, affecting the parts of the brain associated with stress response, memory, motivation, emotion, learning and behaviour. Preliminary results are indicating that these brain changes are continued in the brains of second generation survivors. It is very easy to imagine how these findings might be interpreted as further evidence of pathology in descendants of survivors, without consideration of what these brain changes might mean to their lived experience. Professor Rektor, one of the authors of the study, does admit, however, that it is important to consider how we focus therapy to support survivors and their children (Tercatin, 2019). The current study hopes to make some contribution towards being able to answer to this question.

It is agreed that psychological therapy can help clients to live more consciously with the ongoing impacts of their family's past trauma (Mayer, 2014). The glaring gap in the literature, however, is a rich narrative which goes far enough beyond the trauma - resilience narrative to include emotional, interpersonal and intrapsychic elements of lived experience for third generation members living in the UK (Kidron, 2012).

There are many holocaust survivor families currently living in the UK, alongside other descendants of displaced peoples who have fled atrocities around the world. In future years, our clinical practices will be visited by the children and grandchildren of survivors of countless wars and mass migrations. Whilst no two conflicts or genocides are generalizable, there may be aspects of the experiences included in this research that are relevant for all descendants of mass political violence and resulting displacement.

From his psychotherapeutic work with descendants of the holocaust in Austria, Zaslawski (2016: 150) concludes that: "As a psychotherapist, it is of particular importance to acquaint oneself with the historical background and relevant psychological ramifications of the entire societal context, not only as a whole, but also for every single individual with the use of intensive methods." Gestalt theory teaches us that the 'field' which the practitioner is able to know about and to work with, is constrained only by the practitioner's own perception (Broughton, 2010). This in-depth study of the narratives of descendants of holocaust survivors will support clinicians to widen their own 'fields of vision' when working with their clients, to take into account the implications of intergenerational and socio-historical contexts such as genocide.

Sitting somewhere in between the creative writing of third generation memoirs, autobiographical novels, and the randomized controlled trials of the 1990s and early 21st century there is a gap in the literature which requires research that is as flexible and creative



in its pursuit of knowledge, as it is rigorous and systematic in its data collection and analysis. It is my hope that the current research piece begins to address this gap.

### **How is The Current Research Unique?**

At the time of writing, I was unable to find any published research looking at the third generation, in which the researcher takes an insider-position and shares their experience. The large majority of research into the third generation has included a clinical population, differing from this study which includes co-participants from the general population.

Whilst I have described several studies that do explore the experiences of the third generation using narrative methodology (Bar-On et al 1995; Rosenthal, 2010; Gradwohl Pisano, 2013; Cohen and Morrison, 2017; Toll, 2018) none of these involve participants in the UK; none involve data that was collected in groups, (therefore they do not include group dynamics) and whilst Cohen and Morrison (2017) do involve both male and female participants, the group was homogenous in that they were all teenagers and belonged to a specific community. The heterogeneity of the co-participant group of the current study, as well as the less commonly used focus group method of data collection and the mix of participant narratives and autoethnographic writing, makes a unique and original contribution to the field.

## **(5) METHODOLOGY**

### **Philosophical Underpinnings**

I agree that the turn towards narrative was a much needed methodological response to the positivist paradigms (Clandinin, 20013) as narrative methods allow us to embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship and to acknowledge how knowledge is embedded in a particular context (Lieblich et al, 1998; Clandinin, 2013). I agree that the researcher's rhetoric, prejudice, and experience impacts upon their observations and interpretations of data (Wall, 2006). I have thus been drawn towards methods that rely more on subjectivity, focused on interpretation and co-construction of meaning. This research is based upon the premise that the researcher and researched are in relationship with each other and that all parties will learn and change in the encounter (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Underpinning this research study is a social constructionist epistemology that holds that there are always multiple ways of 'knowing' about any given phenomena. This fits well with my own relativist philosophical views; I believe that we can only attempt to move nearer to describing any reality through our own perceptions and subjective experiences. Autoethnographic writing sits on the borders between post-modernist, social-constructionist philosophy and post-structuralism; I agree that there is always a multiplicity of possible meanings, and I acknowledge the impossibility of recognising them all.

I see the self not as a stable entity, but as holding multiple identities, which may emerge between people in the particular dialogic environment (or cultures) in which they find themselves (Bruner, 1986; Etherington, 2004; Reissman 2008). I agree that the self only exists as a creative invention at any particular time and place (Freeman, 2007), but I also believe that self can only exist against the backdrop of culture; and likewise culture only exists as the product of multiple selves who are either similar or different to one another

(Chang, 2008). It is from this viewpoint that I aim to build a cultural picture through examination of self in relation to four culturally-similar-others.

### **Choosing a Methodology**

Initially I considered a grounded theory study of how therapists assess and treat intergenerational trauma in the clinical situation. I was confronted by difficulties of conceptualizing a research question that would lend itself to an interview schedule, which is unsurprising given the largely unconscious and unsymbolised nature of the topic (Davoire et al, 2004). Researching the topic from such an academic distance felt like a diversion from, and avoidance of my own experiences as a grandchild of holocaust survivors.

I also considered using interpretive phenomenological analysis but felt that this methodology would not allow me to put myself into the research with transparency as the narrative method supports. The conflicting evidence compiled by previous researchers that 'tested' grandchildren for signs of trauma (e.g. Sagi-Schwartz et al, 2008) signaled to me a need for a methodology that could give grandchildren of survivors a voice. Choosing a narrative methodology allowed me to honor my own as well as each participant's experiences by including whole narrative representations.

I believe that part of my difficulty in these early attempts to propose a viable research project was that I was still too enmeshed with my family experience to be able to stand alongside and to turn the lens back on me. I agree with Romanyshyn's (2013) insight that the researcher's own wounds frame their research and so I place my own story as central, rather than in the shadows (Cotter, 2017). As described by Denzin (2014) autoethnography is a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward towards culture, discourse, history and ideology. It is the complex interdependence between personal and

group experience, self and culture, looking inwards/looking outward that I see my project as dealing with.

### **Narrative Research in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy**

Narrative as a reflexive methodology closely aligns with the values and work ethics of psychological therapists, who use themselves within their practice, and who value transparency and authenticity in the therapy relationship (Etherington, 2004). I agree with Polkinghorne (1988) who suggests that psychotherapists rely on narrative knowledge and are most concerned with people's stories. In a profession concerned with the intimate details of peoples' lives, it is most fitting to use a methodology that deals with the private and personal aspects of living that are often obscured from view (Kearney, 2002).

Therapist and anthropologist Salma Siddique (2011) views research *and* psychotherapy as "bearing witness to the lives of others" as the reader is encouraged to 'journey' with the person being studied. This view lends itself to my own aims of 'bearing witness' to the third generation. Siddique (2011) points out the obtainability of 'thick description' in which a nuanced and detailed understanding emerges in more creative qualitative accounts of phenomena, rather than the 'at arms-length' version of data that can be collected in a traditional interview. Connolly (2011: 615) writes: "Any attempt to convey the reality of trauma requires the creation of new aesthetic forms that creatively blend different literary and artistic categories." Narrative methods provide such opportunity to blend academic research with the artistic medium of story, allowing for new meanings to emerge.

Bartlett (2014: 33) suggests that:

"Autoethnography can contribute to the expansion of counselling psychology and psychotherapy's multicultural and social justice agendas, explore the depth and complexity

of the human experience, increase paradigmatic flexibility and give voice to people who have been traditionally marginalised, made invisible, or silenced.”

Bartlett’s (2014) research that combines autoethnography with narrative inquiry to explore mindfulness amongst psychotherapy trainees in her counselling psychology doctoral research informed some of my decisions in how to structure the current study.

### **Project Design Overview**

I have taken heed of warnings that autoethnographic writing can become self-absorbed and self-indulgent if focused solely on the researcher (Brooker & Macpherson, 1999; Van Maanen, 2011). I have also come to agree with Frank’s (2013: xi) assertion in his seminal work on illness narratives that: “To tell one’s story, a person needs other stories.” For the above reasons, I chose a research design that balances my own narrative with the narratives of similar-others (Chang, 2008). This seemed particularly pertinent in a study dealing with a cultural phenomenon and community issue such as the holocaust.

I invited four other adult grandchildren of holocaust survivors to take part in a series of three focus groups that explored shared meanings and differences between our experiences (Platts & Smith, 2017). The focus groups were spaced one month apart, each lasting for two hours.

I transcribed the focus-group recordings using word processor, and the transcripts were analysed in three stages. Firstly, a narrative analysis or ‘thinking with stories’ (Etherington, 2004) was conducted in which I created four narrative representations from each co-participants’ contributions. These narrative representations were sent to each co-participant, and they were then offered the opportunity to feedback on my representation of their narratives. All co-participants accepted the offer of an individual meeting to discuss their feedback, and these meetings deepened and clarified their narratives.

Secondly, I conducted a narrative analysis of the focus groups as a whole, to explore group processes such as group dynamics, in an attempt to make evident the interpersonal context in which the accounts were produced.

Thirdly, I conducted a thematic analysis to elucidate themes that appear across the individual co-participant stories. I provide a clear rationale and step by step guide to illustrate how these analyses were carried out, in order to allow the reader to evaluate the usefulness of these findings (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

### **Focus Group Methodology**

In the past thirty years or so the use of focus groups has ascended into the mainstream of academic research, as social sciences have come to recognize the innate value offered by this methodological approach formerly and most extensively used in marketing studies (Litosseliti, 2003; Carey & Asbury, 2012; Morgan et al, 2016; Platts & Smith, 2017).

I adopted the process that Morgan (2010, 2016) calls 'sharing and comparing' to encourage my co-participants to build on each other's comments through the give and take of interaction. Firstly by sharing their points of view, co-participants could expand their coverage of what it means to them to be a grandchild of survivors, and then by comparing they could differentiate their thoughts and feelings (Morgan et al, 2016). Both of these forms of interaction create possibilities to introduce and talk about ideas that might not have occurred to an individual, and the comparison of views between participants increases the potential for collecting in-depth experiences and strongly-held beliefs (Carey & Asbury, 2012; Morgan et al, 2016). I intended to capitalise upon the 'synergy' in the group interaction that is said to stimulate greater breadth and depth of information and richer insights than would have been allowed by individual interviews alone (Litosseliti, 2003; Carey & Asbury, 2012).

Most importantly, I draw upon one of the very characteristics of the focus group method that has previously been pointed out as a potential limitation: the interpersonal process within the group (Litosseliti, 2003). Noting that ‘the whole is more than the sum of its parts’ (Carey & Asbury, 2012), I have made use of extensive reflective field notes that capture my subjective experience to try and elucidate the interactive processes within the group, which is particularly relevant as the research topic is one which is often only present or ‘knowable’ through unspoken aspects and interpersonal process (Davoire & Gaudilliere, 2007; Rogers, 2007; Coles, 2011).

### **Planning the Focus Groups:**

#### Co-Participants Criteria

My initial criteria for co-participants was that they should have at least one grandparent who has survived the Jewish holocaust of the Second World War, with their own parents being born after the end of the war; otherwise they could be viewed as second generation rather than third.

Co-participants were required to have been born in the UK without any major emigrations to mitigate for participants’ own stories of displacement coming into their narratives.

I stipulated that participants need to be aged between eighteen and forty years old. Older participants will have been born significantly closer to the events of the holocaust, potentially with different impacts upon their experiences and I wanted to create some homogeneity in the group. According to Fern (2001) homogenous groups spend more time interacting and feel more comfortable to share opinions when the group is more compatible and cohesive. On the other hand, heterogeneous groups increase diversity and the range of opinions, positions and experiences that can be elicited (Fern, 2001; Krueger & Casey, 2014). I

attempted to find a balance between homogeneity and diversity by including both genders and different ages and educational backgrounds.

I accepted the first four respondents to my recruitment call that fitted the above criteria. Two individuals who made contact after the quota was filled were given details of organisations that offer support and discussion opportunities to descendants of holocaust survivors. The table in Appendix 3 shows a summary of my co-participants basic demographics:

### Recruitment Process

I appealed to various Jewish organisations including the association for Jewish Refugees (AJR) as well as the Second Generation Voices group, asking them to forward my advertisement to their members/relatives of members. I also posted on a Facebook group titled “Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors.”

When I received an expression of interest, I emailed the participant information sheet to the individual, and I asked if they would be willing to take part in a brief telephone conversation in which we discussed in more detail the nature of the focus groups. These initial telephone conversations were an essential step in how I set up a process of ‘relational ethics’ with my co-participants (Hall, 2014). It was important to explain the need to commit to all three focus groups so that none of the co-participants would misunderstand and expect to attend on only one date. I also spoke about the sensitive nature of the groups, allowing each participant to consider how taking part in the research might impact upon them emotionally, including in ways that they cannot foresee.

Initially I set out to recruit three co-participants, but I decided to extend to four during the recruitment process. This was partly because, of the initial three respondents, two were female and one was male. I felt that a second male voice would add to the group’s gender balance. Several other studies of the third generation have been exclusively focused on



either granddaughters or grandsons (e.g. Gradwohl Pisano, 2013; Moscovitz, 2016), and so including both male and female voices in this research increases the unique contribution of this study as well as maintaining heterogeneity in the group (Krueger & Carey, 2014).

My decision to extend from three to four co-participants was also based upon consideration of the potential negative impacts upon the study if anybody was to drop out of the focus groups once they had begun (Farnsworth & Boon, 2010). I was aware that the research design involved a significant time commitment from my co-participants, and if any were unable to continue, I would not be able to add new co-participants after the groups had begun.

### Focus Group Setting

I set out to find a location which would create a relaxed ambience as participants talk more freely in a comfortable environment (Fern, 2001; Litosseliti, 2003). A fellow psychotherapist (and second generation survivor herself) offered me the use of her studio that she rents out to clinicians and other holistic professionals. Its location in North London, the geographical heart of the Jewish community, would offer convenience and minimize travel for some, which I hoped would allow for retention of participants, and the studio's large space with kitchen and toilet would allow for comfort during the two hour groups. I considered finding a room in a more neutral location such as central London, that might enhance a sense of anonymity, but research has shown that it is actually familiarity that enables and enhances participant sharing in focus groups (Litosseliti, 2003; Carey & Asbury, 2012). The fact that the owner of the studio is the daughter of holocaust survivors meant that the space already connected to my own third generation identity, and I hoped that this might allow me to be present as a third generation co-participant as well as the facilitator of the groups.

I provided refreshments, as food is suggested to be important in creating a welcoming ambience and to prompt pre-and post-session conversation (Carey & Asbury, 2012). I set out two clocks that could be seen from either side of the circle of chairs, as well as two voice recorders to ensure I would still get a recording if one did not work. I ensured that chairs were placed in a way that allowed for optimum eye contact between all co-participants, with a coffee table in the middle that can act as a “protective barrier” to help them feel more secure (Stuart & Shamdasani, 2015).

### **The Process of the Focus Groups:**

It is suggested that a loosely structured and relaxed approach facilitates positive interaction between participants (Platts & Smith, 2017) and allows for a higher degree of response freedom (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). I used Litosseliti's (2003) book on focus groups to develop my question guideline, with a maximum of three to four open-ended questions per session, that would allow time for discussion to build, with adequate ‘face time’ for each co-participant in order to collect rich data in the form of stories rather than short statements (Carey & Asbury, 2012: 231).

To develop my guideline questions, I conducted a pilot group with two of my peers who both have grandparents who survived the holocaust. This allowed me to check that the wording of my questions was clear and made sense, and I noticed that the exercises and questions prompted in-depth discussion. I made clear to them that I did not intend to use the data produced within the study. I gave them fore-warning that the conversation might touch upon sensitive topics, and afterwards I gave them information about where they might receive support if they wished to and I offered them the opportunity to de-brief.

At the beginning of the first focus group session I gave an introduction to the research topic and to the group; the main tenets of which I repeated in the second and third group (please

see Appendix 4). I emphasised my hope that the discussion would be like an informal conversation, and invited people to comment, respond or ask questions of one another rather than wait for me to ask them questions. I attempted to mitigate for the potential problem of people talking over one and another making it difficult to pick out speech in the recordings, by asking that they speak only one at a time. I addressed another potential limitation of the focus group method by explaining that I wanted to hear from everyone, and warned that I might call on those who have not yet spoken. I hope that this would allow for me to intervene if one or two members seemed to be dominating the group, sometimes known as 'self-appointed experts' whilst others who are less accustomed to speaking in a group can remain silent (Stuart & Shamdasani, 2015). In the introduction I also tried to mitigate for the potential negative impact upon the data caused by self-censoring (Janis, 1972) and conforming (Asch, 1951) by explaining to participants that the group aim was not to achieve agreement, and that different sorts of experiences and opinions were welcome (Carey & Asbury, 2012). I have also considered that such criticisms of the focus group approach come from a positivist framework which would attempt to mitigate for the effects of the environment upon the data. As this does not fit with the aims and position of a narrative study, I instead seek to acknowledge and make visible the interactive context in which the narratives were produced by including my own reflexive narrative of the focus groups in the findings of this study.

An icebreaker which is not directly linked to the research topic is suggested to ease people into talking in the group (Litosseliti, 2003; Carey & Asbury, 2012) and so I began with asking each co-participant to talk about their names, starting with my own, as a way to build rapport.

Stuart and Shamdasani (2015) suggest that discussion aids can provide vehicles for expression of interest in ways other than simply talking. In particular I used Krueger and Casey's (2014) suggestion of drawing diagrams of their family structure as a way to stimulate the co-participants to share memories and stories.

To begin the second group, I asked participants to think of a place, person, photograph, or memory that connects to their family's holocaust history, and to hold it in their minds and imagine it for a few seconds. I then asked them to describe what they were imagining, and this prompted rich and in-depth storytelling.

In the third group, I took inspiration from the art therapy activity of using 'yaya objects' to represent some aspect of one's self (Nicol, Moore & Zappa, 2004) and set out various random objects on a table in the studio as prompts for my co-participants to choose something that represented their family holocaust history and their connection to it. I hoped that this would tap into unconscious and creative process that has been suggested as important in communicating the unspoken impacts of intergenerational trauma (Rogers, 2007). Rather than collect the objects myself I asked two colleagues with no connection to the holocaust to choose the objects for me, to prevent my own third generation experience from dominating the data. I used these objects as prompts for discussion and a way to elicit how group members gave meaning to and organised their experiences (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

### Navigating the 'Insider-Researcher' Role

In facilitating the focus groups as an insider-researcher I experienced the tension of being in a state of 'in-between-ness' described by Siddique (2011) when a researcher must straddle two states or roles. Whilst I was initially in agreement that this 'in-betweenness' could be a valuable source for learning, reflection and making meaning of the research, Siddique (2011) does not account for the intense job of processing comments and group interactions during group sessions with multiple co-participants (Carey & Asbury, 2012). As recommended by Farnsworth & Boon (2010), I naturally found myself taking a peripheral, rather than centre-stage role, as I recognised the need to observe and manage the social interactions within the group and make continuous decisions such as how much control to take over the

discussion to keep close to the topic, versus allowing conversation to develop and evolve freely (Litosseliti, 2003). I also had stay cognizant at times that certain group members dominated the discussion, and I paid close attention to the feelings in the room as I felt my responsibility to offer containment and safety. I was also aware of the power dynamic between myself as facilitator, and my co-participants, and that sharing my own experiences might make it harder for some in the group to voice experiences that diverge from my own. For these reasons, I decided not to participate fully as a third generation member in the groups, rather introducing my own experiences as a way to explain my questions, or the context of the group. I used the brief gaps left when the other group members were doing exercises to reflect on the group process and to make decisions about where to go next.

It is possible to trace throughout this research piece my internal positions as researcher, third generation member and as a psychotherapist. Instead of fully integrating these parts, different sections of this thesis 'privilege' different parts of me at any one time, with other parts becoming more background whilst any one is at the fore.

## **Managing the Data**

In the immediate days following each focus group, I conducted an initial listening, during which I made notes in my research diary. I transcribed each focus group within the one month gap between each group, and each transcription was uploaded onto an analysis software programme called MAXQDA 12. This allowed me to read the data in two ways; as three whole focus group sessions, or by extracting the contributions of each co-participant into four separate documents that contain only the utterances of any one individual. I read the transcripts in both ways, before starting to write the narrative representations.

## **Narrative Analysis**

I initially wrote three narratives which told the story of the three consecutive focus groups. I included the contributions of each co-participant, my own contributions, and my observations of the group process to make clear my critical perspective that the narrative I was reproducing was a temporal and social coproduct of all narrators within the focus group (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007).

I abandoned these narratives, however, as they were difficult to follow and the separate voices of each of the co-participants seemed to get lost. On reflection, and following discussion with my research supervisor, in order to honour the voice of each of my co-participants, I wrote separate narrative representations for each of my four co-participants, and another separate narrative on the group process and unconscious dynamics. This allowed separation between their different voices and viewpoints, whilst still making evident the co-constructive and performative nature of how the narratives were produced (Wells, 2011). Having four separate narratives addressed another previous concern that the voices of my co-participants would converge as a sort of 'support act' to my own narrative. Writing their narratives as separate and whole allowed each of them a more respectful position within the study. It also solved an ethical dilemma of how to allow them to feed back upon just their own contributions, which would have been much more difficult with the original three focus group narratives.

When creating the narrative representations I paid attention to the emotive resonance of speech, staying alive for "the absent but implicit meanings in conversations" (Speedy, 2007:20). I highlighted sections of the transcripts which sang to me and I included these sections in stanza form (Speedy, 2007). I found that using this form of poetry allowed me to retain the emotional impact, as it enables the reader to 'hear' it too. I present these narrative analyses or 'thinking with the stories,' as 'knowledge constructions in their own right' (Etherington, 2004). All of the narratives presented within this study are like snap-shots in

time, rather than serving as finished products, and so I have chosen to write them in the past tense. In my narrative representations I have used italics to represent the co-participants' own words, and I use a different font to represent the poetic stanzas. I have included my co-participants' drawings in their narratives, except for Stephen as he was not present in the third group.

As a reflexive researcher, my own narrative evolved throughout the research process, and so I present it at the beginning of the study as a context for the other stories, rather than alongside them.

### **Eliciting Co-participant Feedback**

All of my co-participants took me up on my offer of a face-to-face meeting after reading their narrative representations, which were held at a location convenient to them. These individual meetings were not conducted as interviews to elicit further data; rather they were an attempt to continue to work together in a way that upheld the relational style of ethics integral to the research. The meetings allowed me to check in with co-participants about how they had found the groups, and to offer space for them to de-brief and to express anything that had felt unfinished for them afterwards. I agree with Ellis (2014) that meaning emerges through the writing and re-writing, as I found that participant feedback deepened the narratives and increased my own understanding of their experiences. Only one co-participant used this opportunity to omit rather than elaborate upon my representation of their narrative.

When I had finished re-rendering the narrative representations, I sent them back to the co-participants to be checked again before moving on to the next stage of analysis.

## **Analysing the Group Process**

My narrative of the focus groups is written in a process-oriented, personal style (Tedlock, 2000). I adopt the 'confessional tales' style of writing described by Van Maanen (2011) in which the researcher intimately describes the process of undertaking the research.

I include my personal responses within the focus groups, my immediate reflections made in my journal notes after the groups as well as considerations, thoughts and feelings that came later during the listening and transcribing process (Romanyshyn, 2013).

I include dialogical moments during the focus groups that I have excluded from the individual representations because of the interactional nature of the data; these parts belong more in the group narrative than in any one individual narrative. By including this narrative that is, of course, highly interpretive, I hope to 'show' the reader something of the experience in the room (Davoire & Gaudilliere, 2007). In order to keep within the word count, I have included only two example stories from the group narrative. The whole narrative can be found under Appendix 5.

## **Thematic Analysis**

I have used Carey & Asbury's (2012) guidelines for inductive analysis of focus group data. Analysis began during the group sessions themselves as I processed peoples' comments and stories.

My research question "How do grandchildren of holocaust survivors construct their narratives" can be broken down into the three subsections included below (1-3) I chose to conduct a thematic analysis which would allow me to answer these separate parts to my research question in a systematic and structured way.



1. What stories do third generation survivors tell about themselves, their families and their relationships?
2. What might it mean to my co-participants to be a grandchild of holocaust survivors?
  - What part (if any) does 'third generation holocaust survivor' take up in their sense of self? Their wider lives? The decisions that they make?
  - How might they understand their experiences as relating or not relating to their family holocaust histories?
3. *How* do a group of third generation survivors interact with one another and share their stories? What are the similarities and differences between them? What 'happens' in the group as their share their experiences?

These extended sub-questions guided my reading and analysis, as I paid attention to the stories told, meanings made, and the group dynamics – 'what' was happening as they shared their stories.

Multiple readings of the transcripts ensured that themes were well grounded in the data and codes began at a descriptive level, moving to a conceptual level as categories that were further examined to identify broader, overarching themes (Carey & Asbury, 2012). I coded larger units (not line by line) so not to fracture the data into bits and make it difficult to interpret within the group influence and to keep the meanings of whole stories intact. Reading the three focus group transcripts several times, before pulling out each co-participant's 'stories' into four separate documents to code them, meant that I viewed the accounts within the interactional context that they were produced, and then again by looking at them within the context of just that individual's stories.

I spent time organising and arranging the codes in a creative way using the MAXQDA 12 software to make a colour-coded map. I ended up with eight overarching themes, each with several smaller categories. Please see Appendix 10 for a full map of themes, categories and descriptive codes.

## **Evaluating the Methodology**

Focus group methodology has received much criticism for its difficulties in planning and logistics; limited data quality and ethical challenges. Researchers now recognise, however, that its potential usefulness far outweighs the effort and possible limitations, as focus groups can lead to rich stories that likely would not be told in such detail in another type of study (Carey & Asbury, 2012; Stuart & Shamdasani, 2015). Much of the criticism of focus group methodology comes from a positivist framework, with terms such as representability and replicability being used to assess its value. These terms are not appropriate in evaluating narrative research which is based in a post-modernist framework.

Rather than claiming replicability, I have aimed to uphold trustworthiness, which is more appropriate for such a deeply subjective research process as narrative inquiry. I believe that this has been achieved through the degree of internal consistency of the research design, as well as through collaboration with participants and repeated 'member checking' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 357). I also made use of the small group of peers from my training course that were also using narrative methodology, to elicit checks on my methodological decisions.

Acknowledging the narratives as inter-subjective and situational co-creations, as well as inevitably informed by my own experiences, expectations and context, is "essential to the rigour required of good research" (Etherington, 2004: 31). The reflexive stance that I take in

the group narrative addresses power relations between myself and my co-participants as I make evident the dynamic processes of interaction within which the narratives emerged (Etherington, 2004). Separating the group process narrative from the individual narratives, however, means that the findings of this study do not become 'over-subjective' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

In autoethnography, the aesthetic impact upon the reader is not only one of its advantages as a methodology; its ability to do so is classed as a measure of its validity (Ellis, 2014). In judging autoethnography, Ellis (2014) argues that validity should be looked at in terms of what happens to readers as well as to research participants and researchers. To Ellis (2014), validity means that research seeks verisimilitude, evoking in the reader a feeling that the experience described is 'lifelike, believable and possible'. And so I accept Roger's (2007: 135) assertion that: "In so far as our own aim is to truly be faithful to the living, breathing reality of those we study, it will be imperative to summon all the artfulness we possibly can."

The idea of being 'faithful' to the experiences of those under study, rather than an unachievable and perhaps even false aim of 'truthfulness' has become an important standard to uphold throughout this research.

Chang (2008) warns of an overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation in autoethnography. I carried out a detailed thematic analysis, where the data was explored from various different angles. Lastly, Chang (2008) advises against excessive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source – I have tried to balance this unavoidable aspect by using my co-participants words in their own narrative representations, with plenty of verbatim extracts.

By giving the third generation a voice that might otherwise go unheard, I believe that the stories do promote social justice and equality, a quality criteria set out by Ellis (2004). I believe that the nature of the research topic does also “lead us to think through consequences, values and moral dilemmas” (Ellis, 2004: 195) as the narratives force us to consider the impacts of events of today upon future generations.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues were continually addressed during the process of the research and writing up. I had regular discussions with my research supervisor as well as with two peers who are also writing narrative projects. We organised regular meetings which provided space for reflection as we progressed through our research. A model of relational ethics required me to uphold dignity and respect in the way that I have related with documented others, co-participants, and with my readers (Hall, 2014). I have considered ‘ethics in practice’ as I created a collectively negotiated space where risks and the unknown can be managed in a thoughtful and imaginative way (Hall, 2014). As a guiding framework, I have taken into account ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society, Middlesex University and the Metanoia Institute.

I engaged in ‘process consent’ with family members whom I refer to in my own narrative, viewing consent as dynamic and ongoing, persisting for the life of a project and taking place in a form that is accessible and comfortable for others (Josselson, 2013; Adams et al, 2015). This took the form of open and ongoing dialogue, offering family members a space to communicate their thoughts and feelings. I have continuously checked in with them, keeping this process alive.

I balance an ethical responsibility to allow family members to engage with my experience of our family history at a speed and at a time that is right for them; with a responsibility to

myself to tell my story. I have offered reassurance that my narrative does not necessarily reflect any 'truths' but rather my own view point. I do not make it a requirement that all people documented within my own narratives *should* read any of it, as it is important to be sensitive to their right to disengage.

All interested co-participants were provided with an information sheet that gave sufficient information about the research in an understandable form including possible benefits and risks, information for further support, and discusses confidentiality (please see Appendix 2).

Co-participants were advised during initial phone calls that participating in the research could offer a useful space to reflect in depth upon their family history and their own life. I explained that the groups were not therapy groups, but discussion groups. We talked through the potential risks of the study, such as feeling overwhelmed, or feeling that they have shared more information than they had intended. I gave participants space to voice their concerns about taking part.

In my verbal introduction to the focus groups each month I reminded my co-participants that the group was not a therapy group, although it may touch upon sensitive subjects that evoke feelings that they may not have expected. I invited the group to 'take care' of themselves in deciding what they feel comfortable to share, especially as it may not be possible to make them entirely anonymous in the final write up. I reminded them that they could withdraw from the study at any time, but asked the group to try to let me know if they were feeling overwhelmed or concerned at any point, reminding them that they could speak with me after the group or in-between meetings. I requested that nobody make disparaging remarks about anybody else.

On the information sheet given to each co-participant I included the details of a monthly therapy group in North London specifically for descendants of the holocaust, as well as contact details for Shalvata, which is a service that offers both practical and emotional support to families and the survivors of the Holocaust.

Confidentiality was discussed at the beginning of the group and co-participants were advised of their role in this. I did not guarantee to my co-participants that their material would not be identifiable by a reader that may personally know the co-participant or their family. I have changed all co-participants' names, and offered to change other basic details such as small changes to age, or other demographics. In the end, all of the co-participants requested that their basic identities should not be changed so that the details of their lives remained identifiable.

Documented others that are included in my co-participants' stories, such as their family members, were not able to give their own consent. I have had to balance this ethical dilemma with the importance of allowing the third generation members to find their own voices. I have attempted to use respectful sensitivity in my narrative representations when dealing with my co-participants' descriptions of others. I also discussed with my co-participants that full confidentiality for their family members might not be possible if somebody known to their family was to read the study.

### Relational Ethics

I see the collaborative feedback process with co-participants as a good example of where I have employed a relational ethics that includes respectful negotiation. During one of the focus groups one co-participant shared an anecdote, and then said afterwards that particular story was confidential, and so I did not include it within her narrative. I also deleted various sections from another narrative after the co-participant asked for those sections to be omitted when she was surprised by the impact of her words when she saw them on paper. I

did not promise to revise or omit anything that I had written after this reviewing stage, and nor did I offer the chance to pull out of the study after my write-up was complete.

During the focus group and individual meetings, we discussed the effects of the holocaust, and our experiences of family and culture, which had the potential to be distressing, in ways that neither I nor the co-researchers had anticipated. In narrative inquiry research such as this study, gaining full consent from co-participants is impossible before the content of the discussion is known and so it has been important to remain ethically engaged and mindful throughout the project (Etherington, 2007). Allowing each co-participant individual space to de-brief and explore their experiences in the group, is also essential in how I attended to relational ethics. I opened an explicit conversation with each co-participant on the dilemma of consent, and asked how they felt after the groups. After they had read my representation of their narratives, I asked them whether the experience had matched their expectations, as well as any discrepancies between what they had believed they were consenting to at the beginning of the project, and what the experience had been like. I also made explicit to them that, although I hoped that they could recognise themselves within the representations, they were interpretive and based upon my subjective response to their narratives. I hoped that this would go some way to address power relations between myself, the researcher, and the researched.

My engagement with researcher reflexivity in the group narrative, which attempts to outline my own contributions to the group, also address the power relations between myself and my co-participants (Etherington, 2007). I have attempted to make explicit how my own history, values and expectations also shaped what my co-participants shared (or didn't share), as well as how I allowed my own narrative to be shaped by my experience of carrying out this research.

I have used a research diary to give myself reflective space during the research process. I continued to engage in personal weekly therapy in order to process any strong feelings triggered by the research. I have asked of myself and of others who edit my project, to help me write stories that are 'lovingly honest' rather than 'brutally honest' (Ellis, 2004) in order to protect my boundaries and amount of exposure through the study write up. The reflexive position that I take in this research



## (6) THE NARRATIVES

### Ilana

Ilana's appearance was stylish yet modest as she arrived for the first focus group, reflective of the modern-orthodox Jewish community within which she lives. In our initial telephone contact Ilana, who was twenty one years old at the time of the focus groups, seemed to convey confidence that suggested a maturity beyond her years, so that I expected to be meeting somebody who looked much older than she did.

Within the first few minutes of introductions, Ilana referred to herself as a *ghetto born Jew*, going on to explain how everybody in her community lives around one another so that they can be near to synagogues, schools and mikvahs (ritual baths). The word *ghetto*, however, has connotations of a time when European Jews grouped together under circumstances of persecution and fear. Ilana linked being a *ghetto born Jew* to her perception of her family as having retained their European identities and culture, unlike other families who have been here for longer, who are *very British*.

Their continuing religious observance has meant that Ilana's family is less assimilated into British culture; *they are more Hungarian*. Causing some conflict within the family, Ilana's brother has become less religious as an adult which their mother tries to conceal from the rest of the family. Ilana describes how her brother has become an outsider, with tattoos and piercings, no longer wearing his kippah (skull cap). Ilana, however, has remained close to her family and to the Jewish community. When we met for our individual meeting after the three focus groups, Ilana wore a sheital which covered her hair; signifying that she was now married.

For Ilana, holocaust history is *all through both of my families*.

*I've always been interested in the holocaust, you know, my (four) Grandparents are survivors, and it's just something I've always been interested in, I'm very close to my Grandparents.* Ilana described her life as *a result of holocaust survival* and that she feels an *umbilical-cord* connection with her history.

At the time of the first focus group Ilana was beginning her third year of studying English literature at university. She was planning to write her third-year dissertation on holocaust literature, despite her trepidation about coming across to her university peers as: *So typical, the Jewish girl wants to do something holocaust based.* Ilana imagined that people might have ideas of *Jewish victimhood*, perceiving her as a Jew that will take any opportunity to talk about the holocaust. This does not deter her, she said; *It's just an awareness I have.*

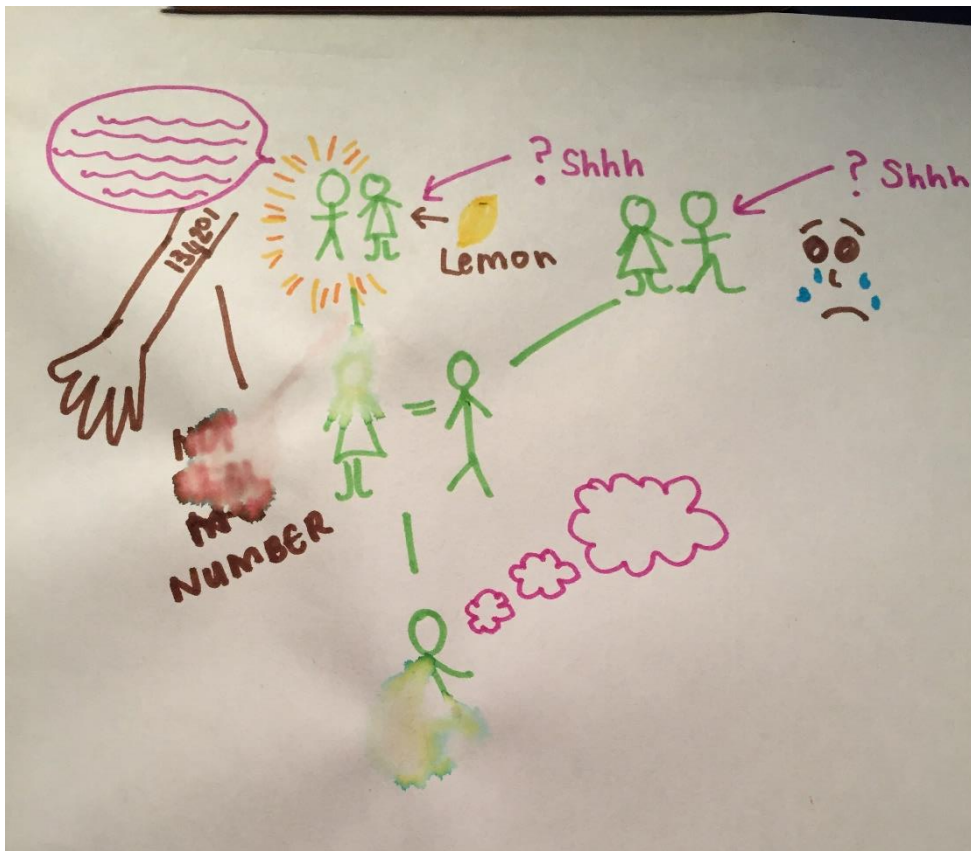
When talking about her name at the start of the first group, Ilana told us her middle name is Esther:

*And Esther I think is a beautiful name to have*

*Because of what it symbolizes,*

*A strong woman,*

*Who wasn't afraid to speak up for herself.*



Represented in her drawing above, Ilana introduced her family. Her maternal grandparents whom she referred to as *sabba* and *safta* on the left hand side, both from Hungary and both of whom were holocaust survivors. She then introduced her paternal grandfather, a holocaust survivor from Poland, and her paternal grandmother who left Berlin when she was a little girl, just after Kristallnacht, both on the right hand side of her picture.

Ilana represented herself in her drawing with thought bubbles, because more recently she had been curious, and sees herself as *more emotionally attuned to it*. As Ilana spoke throughout the three focus groups, the voices of all four of her grandparents were also present, and so I have separated Ilana's stories of each grandparent:

*She thinks she's a holocaust survivor,*

*But - (Ilana laughs) –*

*She is, but,*

*She goes to the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies,*

*Like the big one in central London,*

*And my mum and her*

*Don't get along,*

*You know,*

*In-law relationships.*

*She (Ilana's mother) goes:*

*'She's always trying to get attention for herself,*

*She's not really a holocaust survivor.'*

Ilana's paternal grandmother moved out of Germany without having to *really experience the hardship of the holocaust, especially when my mum's father and mother are definitely holocaust survivors*. Ilana appeared to become less sure of this narrative as she went on: *But, it's interesting how there is like, comparable suffering... But the truth is, she was out of Europe at the time of the war... What would you class as a survivor?* She began to question the accepted family narrative of whose experiences really 'count'.

Ilana's paternal grandfather passed away when she was sixteen, before she had felt curious enough to question him about his experiences. He was represented in her picture by the tears and the 'shhh.' *My father said he's traumatized and he never spoke about it.*

*One time,*

*His mother,*

*They did a raid,*

*And they were all hiding,*

*And they were in a very small cramped area,*

*And there wasn't a lot of breath,*

*And,*

*A lot of oxygen.*

*So then,*

*My grandfather was in hiding,*

*His mother went up for air,*

*She,*

*Um,*

*And my grandfather,*

*He was traumatized by that.*

*To see her being shot like that.*

There was a breathlessness and repetition to this part of Ilana's account, not in keeping with how she usually expressed herself within the group.

*My grandmother, she doesn't like to speak about it...* Ilana's grandmother passed away around one year before the group. She represented her maternal grandmother with a *lemon* because she was very bitter about her experiences, naturally, but also just about the perpetrators of them. Ilana's interest in Jewish history and her enjoyment in travelling around Europe provoked dismay in her grandmother:

*She would say how,*

*The air is anti-Semitic...*

*She just didn't like it,*

*That I was so interested in exploring Europe,*

*And she kinda just wanted to shut it away.*

During Ilana's last year at school, she expressed her excitement to be going on a trip to Berlin, to which her grandmother responded:

*I can't stand that you're talking about this, why are you excited to go there?*

Ilana also travelled to Vienna the summer leading up to the first focus group and she remarked how, had she been alive, her grandmother *would have hated it*.

*...And it's funny because my grandfather, when I went to Budapest with him, we went on like a whole tour of Hungary, and he's singing Hungarian folk songs with one of his friends in the car, and I was thinking: 'Safta would never do that, like, she'd hate this, she'd never go...'*

Ilana reflected on how little she knows of her grandmother's story: *It's not a clear narrative. It's very disjointed, because she was eight*. Ilana was aware, however, of her grandmother's feelings of *bitterness*.

*She obviously doesn't have very positive feelings*

*Towards Hungarians and Hungary,*

*And towards Europeans in general,*

*Because well...*

*They turned on her.*

*She always loved Israel,*

*Like she's the most Zionist person I know.*

Of her four grandparents, Ilana is closest to her maternal grandfather, who regularly gives public talks about his holocaust experiences, to which Ilana often accompanies him. In her

picture she represented him with a big speech bubble *because he just talks about it and he's very vocal about his experiences and he really feels a duty to continue talking about it*. She depicts him as *showing off his scar* (the number tattooed on his arm). *He kind of sees it as a badge of honour; 'Oh you know; I should show you my number,' like he slips it in at the end of each talk*. The words *'not real number'* have been blurred on her picture, but she clarifies that she does not know his real number off by heart.

*...Obviously I think of myself as being a granddaughter of a survivor. When I think of that survivor I think of my (maternal) grandfather... I guess because he's an Auschwitz survivor, and he's branded...*

Ilana described a close connection with her grandfather who survived in Auschwitz concentration camp. She told how her grandfather likes to introduce her as his granddaughter who *'knows my story more than I do'*.

Ilana's grandfather is a *popular old man... everyone loves him except my grandmother*, she joked. Ilana described her maternal grandparents' conflicting ways of managing their trauma, and how it made them a *comical old couple*:

*"...My grandfather wrote a book,  
And then someone translated it to English,  
And then everyone who sees him is always very deferential and  
"Oh Mr. \*\*\*\*\* your book is so well-written."  
Everyone is very respectful to him,  
And he also gets almost like a hero status,  
And everyone is so proud of my grandfather,  
Except his wife (Ilana laughs).*

*She says:*

*'Why do you go on about your experiences?*

*No one is interested anymore,*

*... Just shut up about it!'*

Ilana reflects that her maternal grandparents were *more focused on raising a family than on parenting itself*. Ilana enjoys a very close relationship with her mother, however, and feels that her mother loves her *ferociously, like a lion*, often becoming enraged if she perceives that Ilana is not being treated well enough. When we meet for our individual meetings, Ilana is pleased that she has been able to move into a house with her new husband just around the corner from her parents' house.

Ilana was seven or eight years old when she first remembered hearing about the holocaust. This is the same age that her maternal grandmother was at the time of her trauma.

*It was on Shabbos (Sabbath)*

*And we were at my grandparents' house,*

*And we were sitting in the dining room,*

*And I remember*

*They were talking about gas chambers*

*And showers*

*And I didn't understand,*

*I was like,*

*A shower,*

*And the shower kills you?*



*I was just confused.*

*I just remember thinking 'what?'*

*...It's like all fractured memories...*

Whilst Ilana was exposed to the realities of the holocaust at a young age, she expresses her frustration at other people who know less. Recently, at one of her grandfather's talks, a young man from the audience approached her grandfather and asked him a question about the concentration camps that Ilana considered a *basic question*:

*... and I was thinking: 'you're an idiot, like you're really ignorant you don't know that, you're twenty-something, you should know that...' I just get frustrated...*

Ilana does not feel that her parents hid any of the realities of the holocaust from her, and so she was recently surprised to hear that a friend of her grandfather who was a holocaust survivor-parent had discouraged his children from visiting Auschwitz.

*I guess it's about protecting*

*– He didn't say anything about his grandchildren -*

*But he didn't want his son to see how he suffered*

*So I always found this interesting.*

*I've never heard of that before –*

*Parents saying that to children.*

*...I don't feel like I wasn't protected*

*But I don't feel like I was protected.*

*It just was a fact.*

Ilana reflects further:

*The thing is my grandfather only started speaking about it shortly after I was born*

*And that's quite interesting.*

*Not because it's to do with me*

*But just that's when it became acceptable to talk about it.*

When Ilana spoke about her pride in her grandparents, she singles out her maternal grandfather. She tells how after the war, aged only fourteen years old, her grandfather managed to *build his life*. When Ilana's grandfather hears himself referred to as a *holocaust* survivor, she told us, it *kind of grates on him a little bit*" because he feels that he is a lot more than that:

*I survived the holocaust*

*And then I'm a grandfather,*

*I'm a great grandfather.*

*I was a husband,*

*A father*

*I'm a brother.*

*I was a son*

*And I'm a business man.'*

Ilana reflects that there's like there is a lot more to her grandfather than *just holocaust Survivor*.

When we met individually, Ilana re-iterated that what she felt most strongly, was pride. She related a strong feeling of purpose in her life, to her grandfather's *miraculous survival*. She recalled an old black and white photo of him:

*If you look at him he's a very skinny little boy and children didn't survive Auschwitz.* She went on to describe how for some people, survival *really seemed supernatural*.

*And just all these things,*  
*All these random happenings that helped him survive*  
*Has given me a real purpose in life*  
*To really achieve*  
*And try hard at everything I do,*  
*Because it's kind of like my grandfather wasn't supposed to survive*  
*So anyone that comes from him wasn't meant to be here.*  
*And the fact that we are here means we have a purpose*  
*So I do really feel very proud of my family.*  
*I really do think it's a blessing*  
*– All my family,*  
*We all feel very strongly about that.*  
*It's very meaningful that our grandparents survived.*  
*Look what they've got*  
*And look what we can do with our lives...*  
*I don't know how he survived.*  
*There's no other way of say it,*  
*Anyone that survived its miraculous.*

Ilana admitted that sometimes this blessing that gives her such purpose, can also feel like a burden.

*...It also means I'm a crippling perfectionist.*

*Well, I'm practising mindfulness!*

*No, it's not like that...*

*But I'm a lot better at it than I was*

*But I do put a lot of pressure on myself.*

Ilana described having strong perfectionist tendencies, with a drive to always be doing and accomplishing something. Ilana elaborated that her natural state was an anxious one, that she regularly *over-thinks*, with her decision-making governed by *shoulds and musts*.

*I have this amazing opportunity of life... I need to read every book!*

She directly related her *anxious tendencies* to the holocaust; *because I am alive, and I wasn't supposed to be.*

Ilana told the following anecdote about her experience using a Jewish Orthodox dating website. A matchmaker - a traditional role in Orthodox Judaism - matches together users of the website, and contacts the referees specified on each user's profile before introducing the two matches. One such match-maker had seen the blurb on Ilana's online profile, in which Ilana had mentioned that she has written a lot on the holocaust. The match-maker made contact with Ilana's friend who was acting as a referee for her, and asked: *Is it a kind of an obsession that she has?*

*...She said it in quite a negative way –*

*She said*

*'Is she obsessed about the holocaust?'* –

*As though it's some kind of pathology.*

*Erm,*

*And then my friend said*

*'But you sort of are'.*

*I'm like,*

*'No!*

*Why would you..?'*

*Obsessions are kind of negative.*

*Why would it be considered negative to really engage with part of our Jewish history?*

*And I wouldn't even say Jewish history.*

*I'd say Jewish present,*

*Because it's still something that reverberates with us.*

*I thought it sounded really,*

*Like,*

*I don't know,*

*Ignorant of her.*

*I think I was just asked my interests or something,*

*I don't know.*

*And what else am I going to say,*

*'I like skiing?!'*

*I don't know.*

*Anyway.*

Ilana describes how the holocaust history is very much part of her experience of the present:

*It's funny because I live in Golders Green,*

*And I walk around*

*And I see images of the holocaust,*

*Like there's this boy that I always recognise*

*And he wears like a,  
 I don't know what type of hat it is,  
 It's like one of those religious hats,  
 A black one...  
 It looks like something out of the ghetto,  
 And on Shabbos (Sabbath) when I walk around  
 And I see everyone walking,  
 I see images of the (laughing) Ghetto.  
 So I very much,  
 I always think about the holocaust*

Ilana reflects on writing her dissertation:

*It's going to overtake my thoughts,  
 Even more so than it does already (laughs).  
 But then,  
 On the other side,  
 My Grandfather also thinks we should all get up from mourning.  
 That's what he says.  
 We need to get up from mourning.*

According to Ilana's grandfather, the Jewish people are still in mourning and have not yet risen. He feels that it is time that the Jewish people *got up*. When we met individually, Ilana told me that she disagrees with her grandfather. Ilana believed that, as other genocides have been quickly forgotten, we need to *keep the holocaust on the agenda*.

Ilana shared her concerns that if the holocaust is not talked about, it will be forgotten. She wondered what *the future will look like when no one knows any more survivors and all that we have left is literature and films and there's a gap, because... there's a massive space between representation of an event through film, literature and various other resources and the event itself. And that space can grow bigger, and bigger and bigger until it's not a space anymore because there's no other representations of it. And that's when things get forgotten.*

Ilana shared her excitement that she had recently been accepted to participate in a social-action trip to India, organised by the office of the Chief Rabbi. She discussed her conflicting feelings about participating in this trip:

*If it does give our life meaning,  
Which I definitely feel,  
And then I feel guilt for that,  
Because who are we to take a positive from so much suffering,  
But why wouldn't we,  
I mean,  
If there's anything good that can come from suffering,  
People living with more purpose  
And meaning in their life  
Or living with more awareness of the needs of others  
And a commitment to being a better person.  
Why wouldn't that be something that we should encourage?  
So that is something I'm feeling conflicted with,*

*Even though I definitely feel the positives of it.*

Amongst the objects that Ilana chose to represent her holocaust history, she chose a candle, and matches. She described the candle as *the universal symbol of remembrance*, and then the matches to *make sure that the flame is continuously lit and relit*.

*If you have a room and then you put in a flame,*

*Then that flame has the power to dispel so much darkness.*

*Let's say you share a flame,*

*What happens to the original flame?*

*It isn't diminished.*

*Unlike anything else.*

*Let's say you have a fist full of sand.*

*If you give sand,*

*Your own is diminished.*

*But with a flame,*

*The more you give,*

*The more there is,*

*And I can't think of another example of something physical like that,*

*That the more you give,*

*The more there is.*



## Lex

When Lex arrived for the first focus group, she sat next to Ilana, the only other female member of the group, and they connected over their similar silver-coloured shoes. Lex was a twenty nine year old woman, recently married with a professional career in marketing.

Lex told us that her paternal grandparents had *come out of Germany* just after Kristallnacht, a night of violence where Jewish businesses were attacked and destroyed across Europe. Her grandparents had left Europe separately, and at a different times, meeting as refugees in the UK, eventually settling in London. Her two great-aunts who were important figures in Lex's life, were also refugees.

*They kind of built this community when they got to the UK,*

*But my grandfather came over,*

*He got out of a camp,*

*And then managed to make his way over here...*

*His sister went over to Sweden*

*And then made it over to Palestine*

*And then my other great aunt was on the Kinder transport as well.*

Lex does tell us that she views her grandparents as survivors:

*Because they survived the experience,*

*And they've been displaced,*

*And almost that in itself,*

*Especially as lots of our grandparents' age*

*Would have been young children or teenagers,*

*And that in itself is hugely traumatic.*

Lex questioned the distinction between those who survived the concentration camps in Europe, and those classed as refugees. She views them as *one and the same* despite having asked me when she signed up to the group, whether she would 'count' as her grandparents had left Europe relatively early on during the war. Referring to the conversation about whether refugees are to be 'counted' as survivors, she commented: *But I don't have strong feelings towards it to be honest.*

Lex's married name was adopted by her husband's grandparents when they arrived in the UK from Europe, a name that *was less obviously Jewish* than their original name. Lex gave a sense of the assimilation that took place in her own family, as her maiden name is a shortened version of the original Polish name, changed by her grandfather so that people in the UK would be able to spell and pronounce it more easily. Trying to fit in to a host country by attempting to minimise difference came into both sides of her family narrative.

When Lex talked about her paternal grandparents she described them as warm and loving, although her relationship with them was imbued with a sense of duty. She visited her grandparents *pretty much religiously, every weekend, if not every other weekend* and described being brought up to respect them, for all that they had been through. She suggested that integrating into UK society continued to be a key issue for them: *It was interesting for them to obviously find their place within the British community and be part of London.*

Lex described having positive and influential relationships with both of her great aunts, who also escaped from Germany. One great aunt was *fun-loving* and *would want to go and*

*explore with us and the other who was unbelievably intelligent and spoke, you know, half a dozen languages and would always spend time with us.*

Lex had brought a book with her to the first focus group that she did not take out from her bag, but she referred to it a couple of times. She said that knowing she was coming to the group she had imagined that she might have wanted to look up some details of her family's story. This book contained the translated letters between members of her family who had dispersed around Europe at the time of the holocaust. Like the closed book that Lex appeared to be a custodian of, Lex felt the importance of her family's past, but awaits the *right time* to open it.

Lex reflected on being less able than other members of the group to present her family history with a time-line of events, as her knowledge of the holocaust came more *from history lessons and museum visits, peppered with a few conversations* at home that were *anecdotal* rather than comprehensive narratives with facts and dates.

Lex said that her dad was more emotionally connected to his parents' experiences than Lex herself, having grown up in the midst of his parents' attempt to integrate into a new culture. When I asked her to expand upon this, Lex says that it isn't something that comes up in family conversations. *We could talk about it if I wanted to*, adding that as a family, they talk about a range of different subjects, but the holocaust does not often come up.

She reflects further on why she knows less of her grandparents' narratives than some others in the focus group:

*I think,*

*That's probably because I haven't had detailed conversations,*

*My great aunt does talks as well*

*I have not yet gone to hear one of her talks,*

*I do intend to soon.*

*Now I understand what's happened,*

*I understand that severity of it,*

*But partly from basic conversations we've had,*

*You have a history lesson in school,*

*And then you connect the two when you go to Yad Vashem (the holocaust museum in Jerusalem)*

*You kind of bring it all together,*

*At points,*

*But then I think you probably go,*

*Ok,*

*Come home,*

*And just sort of park it for a bit.*

*But then it comes back out again.*

*I hadn't chosen to like,*

*Deeply engage with it...*

*Probably not enough to talk about it openly....*

*At the right time,*

*I'm not sure what that time would be...*

At various times Lex mentioned that she was waiting for the *right time* to engage differently with her history, although it is not clear what that might actually mean in practice:

*Yeah, I realise after I said it that I'm not actually sure how I would go about it.*

For Lex, finding her own way to personally contribute to the preservation of the stories and experiences of those who survived the holocaust is a responsibility that she felt strongly. Attending the focus groups and contributing to my research was one way that she felt that she was beginning to fulfil that responsibility: *You're writing a document about it, so that's kind of, keeping it going.* This had felt increasingly important to Lex as *people (the survivors) are now starting to pass away.*

Lex told us about the recent conversation that she had with her great aunt regarding her taking part in these focus groups, to which her great aunt responded: *Oh, you know you've never had any in depth conversations with me, I mean you haven't discussed it at any great length before...*

*And I guess when you're a kid*

*They are doing it to protect you from the realities*

*And you don't fully understand*

*And it's not the nicest conversation to have.*

*But it is interesting how it's almost flipped around now*

*And it's actually like,*

*Now you're an adult,*

*You don't necessarily need to be protected to the same extent.*

*Now it feels like it's my responsibility*

*And it's my fault I didn't find out*

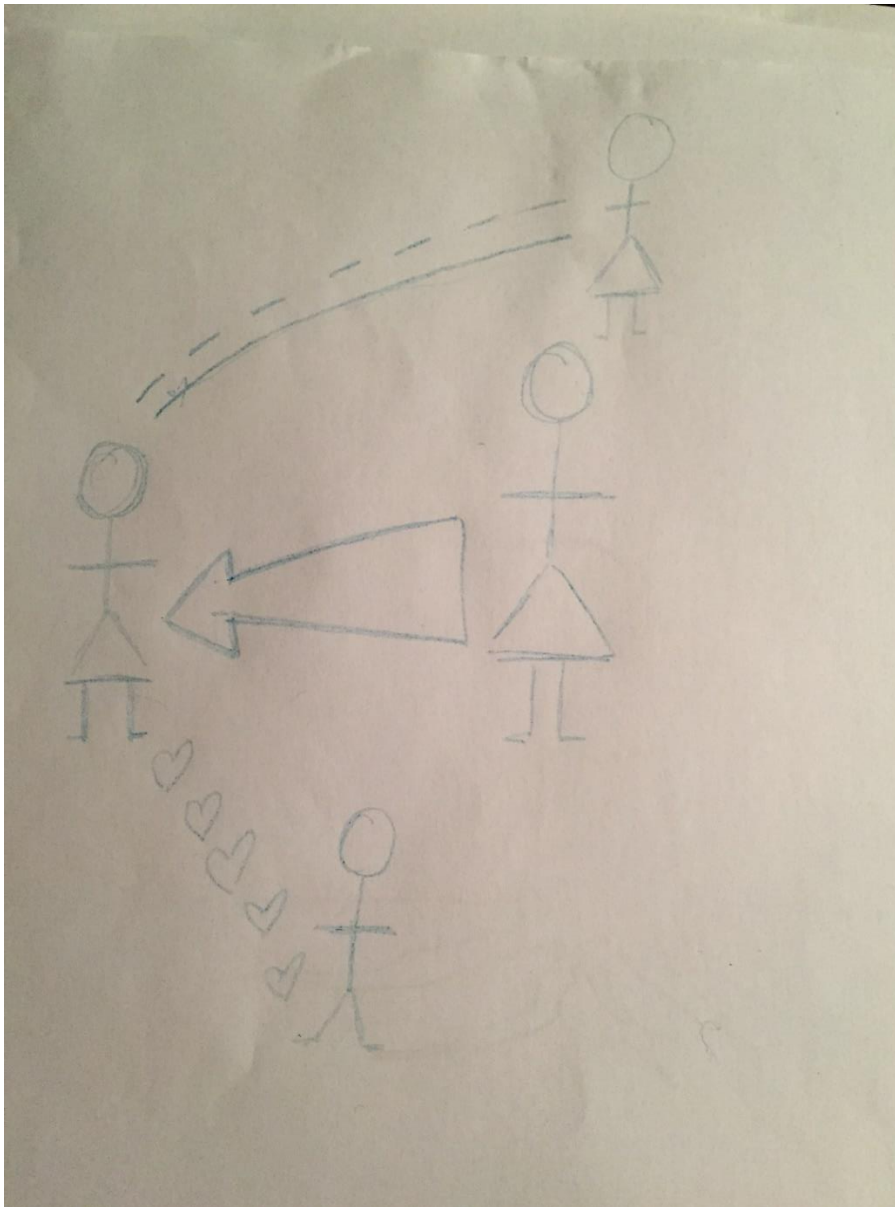
*And my Aunt was like: 'You know, I'm only going to be around for a few more years'*

*...I think it's made me kind of realise*

*I probably do at the right moment need to talk to her about it in more detail*

*...It's just finding the right time and the right questions and the right point to poke it as such.*

When we met following the focus groups, Lex clarified that the focus groups had been the starting point of a *period of reflection* for her that had provoked some conversations within her family in which they shared anecdotes and memories, that built on what she knew.



In her family tree, Lex represented her loving grandfather as connected to her by hearts, her relationship with one great aunt who lives in Israel as lines that show the intermittent but strong presence in her life, and her relationship with her other great aunt with an arrow, commenting that she felt *drawn to her*.

Later on Lex reflected that this 'draw' is partly to do with her great aunt's strong values and opinions. Lex reflected that within her family, her own opinions can sometimes get lost.

*It's almost like, their opinions are the ones that count, almost more than mine.*

Lex feels that it is very important to show respect for her family. When we met individually Lex was keen to make sure that her narrative did not include anything that could cause offense to her family members.

Lex also described how she needed to *tread carefully* with what she could say openly at school, too: *I didn't go to a Jewish school so everyone has different opinions and you're wary of sharing your thoughts and your experiences.* At work, she sometimes needs to explain to colleagues that she is taking time off work to observe the high holy days, but adds that: *You have to realise that some people have never met a Jewish person, so then there's a whole world of questions that people ask you.*

Lex said that she does not sit and talk even to her Jewish friends about the holocaust, and she realised that she does not know if many of her friends have a historical background in the holocaust, even though she has known them for years.

*But interestingly when I mentioned to someone about doing this, it started a conversation about their grandparents. So, actually, when you start a conversation, everyone has a connection and everyone has different levels of interest.*

Lex expressed great appreciation for the sense of connection within her family and community, which she tied to their holocaust history:

*I think it's given me and my family an identity*

*And a wealth of history*

*That maybe other families in the UK don't necessarily have...*

*It pulls us together as a family*



*And probably keeps you closer as a family*

*Whereas other people,*

*Other British families don't have the same history and that connection*

*That brings them together in the same way...*

*I think it's a positive thing.*

*It's given us a purpose*

*And brought us all together*

*Whether it's your individual family*

*Or as a community of people.*

*If you think of other faiths*

*I don't think you can compare*

*The strength of those communities*

*In the same way.*

Lex noticed the conkers that I had placed on a table with many other objects, and commented that they had sparked a memory of her Grandparents' house. So, *my grandparents lived on \*\*\*\*\* Hill and I associate that place so heavily with them now. And they lived in a house there and they never did anything to the house so it still looked as it did in the 1930s.*

*But my dad,*

*When he was a kid*

*Planted a conker in the garden*

*At the back of the garden*

*And then it grew into an absolutely huge oak tree*

*About five metres tall kind of thing,*

*And then every autumn,*

*Roughly around this time of year*

*It used to shed literally all the conkers onto the lawn*

*And I remember as a kid*

*I used to collect them*

*And I remember Grandpa had built this shed at the back of the garden*

*And then we would collect them all*

*And have conker fights at the back of the garden.*

Through her father's planting of a seed, he had created the space for fun and playfulness to emerge for the third generation of Lex's family.

*That time of year and the conkers; that was a playful time of year.*

Lex discussed how she had individuated from her parents in deciding how she will observe Jewish laws, and what they mean to her: *When you start going down generations, because when you become an adult and you have your own home you do what you think is right, which may not be what your parents did so then everyone dissects what they want to do on the High Holy days, what they want to do on Shabbat, how they want to eat out, or what defines kosher for them. Everyone takes it and does it differently. There is no right or wrong.*

Lex reflected that she had never personally experienced antisemitism. She seemed surprised and somewhat confused about the reports of rising antisemitism on the news as well as within the community, as this did not match her daily experience.

*To take it on a slightly different path... something that I have always, kind of, thought about, is the strength and the courage that these people had. Even coming over on the Kinder transport, or - all these sorts of experiences and the strength that these people had and then you think about us, and we, you know, get on the tube and we complain that someone's standing on our toes or you have to go for a long walk and you complain. And you think, God, think about that in comparison to what these people went through. You know. How did they have the strength physically and mentally to do that?*

To Lex, for whom the world is a place where *everything you need is at your fingertips* the strength and courage necessary to survive the holocaust seemed incomprehensible.

*"I don't think I would have the mental or physical strength to be able to do it."*

In the absence of detail in her family's story, Lex imagined that her ancestors had a mental and physical strength and courage that she may not.

Lex explained that she felt a sense of urgency and responsibility to talk about the holocaust, despite not having a clear narrative for her family's experiences:

*We are the last people who are going to have that connection, so, probably the last generation of people that will have that sort of need and desire to want to talk about it, whereas when we get one generation further down it will be something they've heard about, in a history book, and read about maybe in one of our family books or family albums but that's as far as they'll be able to take it – they won't have had those conversations so it won't be as tangible for them...*

*...It's kind of, almost our responsibility to carry on some of those stories and carry on that tradition in whatever shape or form that might be, whether it's talking about it tonight, or carrying on kind of spreading the word, so I think it's when you get to that age and you can sort of talk about it, and understand a bit more, what, actually, happened.*

When asked to choose an object that represents their relationship with their holocaust history, Lex picked up a pen.

*Everyone wants to carry on their story. Obviously we have got the original stories but now, you know, we've been talking about how we keep them alive. And it's not necessary via a written form, like using this pen, but whether you verbalise it or whether it's done through drama or its done through music, or however it's done– it's just, the importance to me of keeping the stories alive and keeping them going...*

She chose the word *responsibility* to sum up her experiences of the group:

*Even just being here and talking about it,*

*Is a sense of responsibility.*

*So different touches throughout my life*

*That would pass on those stories.*

## Raphael

Raphael had travelled from South London to participate in the groups, hoping that taking part in the research would be *a way of engaging with other Jews in London, because... I don't really bump into Jews on my side of the river*. He was also curious if there were others who had similar experiences to him, and hoped that joining the group could be *validating* of his own feelings and experience.

Raphael was the first to arrive to each of the three groups despite living the furthest away. Whilst we waited for the others, Raphael was keen to tell me about his personal experiences of modern day antisemitism. Prompted by his observation of the small figurines of Egyptian deities lined up along a shelf in the studio in which we met, he launched into a story, set some years ago in Cairo airport, returning from a holiday with his girlfriend at the time. He recounted being taken to an interview suite and being subjected to an aggressive interrogation by a *sleazy Egyptian soldier*:

*And I kept thinking:*

*'Oh God*

*I'm going to end up in Cairo prison central or something...'*

*It was very frightening.*

*'Cos they were asking,*

*'You must be Jewish with a name like this',*

*'You must be working for Mossad (the Israeli secret service)'.*

*And I'm thinking*

*'Oh my God',*

*I'm thinking*

*I'm English!*

*I'm English!'*

*And they eventually let me go,*

*And I got walked onto the plane itself and sat on my chair,*

*And I was fastening up my buttons,*

*Fast as I can,*

*Thinking*

*'You're not getting me off this plane now'*

*And then the guard leaned forward*

*And he just said:*

*'Don't ever come back to Egypt.'*

Moving onto another experience in Frankfurt airport he described *a big fat German guy at the border control* who asked him to reveal his necklace which had sounded the metal detectors. The necklace was a gold star-of-David; a recognisable Jewish symbol. As Raphael walked through, he heard the official say, in German: *Oh, at least another fucking Jew out of the country.*

He expressed his outrage at the time: *I was kicking off big time, and I thought I'm not having this in Germany.*

Raphael's stories of discrimination, and of feeling displaced and disconnected from the Jewish community seemed to mirror certain elements of his family narrative. Raphael's family members were forcibly displaced from their homes. The Nazi authorities declared his family line 'illegitimate' and forced them to change their names before they were deported from Germany.

As a fourteen year old boy, Raphael's grandfather escaped from Europe on the kinder transport, along with his younger brother, to whom he became *mother, father and brother* in their new lives in the UK. They were separated from their parents and older siblings on a train platform, never to be reunited, as the rest of his family were exterminated in the concentration camps. Arriving in the UK with only a black-and white photo of his family, Raphael's grandfather *had no parents to seek advice from* and he and his younger brother had to *build their families from scratch*. Raphael surmised that the lack of parental figures in his grandfather's life made it difficult for him to know how to be a father himself.

After the war, Raphael's grandfather was denied naturalisation in the UK *despite the fact he'd married an English, Jewish lady*. Raphael explained that his deportation back to Germany was related to some illegal acquisition of money for a business that he had started. He told how his grandfather had hidden himself from the police in an upstairs wardrobe, smoking a cigar, the smoke of which gave him away to the deportation officers that had come to arrest him. He was deported back to Germany in 1946, the same year that Raphael's father was born. Having spent the majority of his life stateless, Raphael's grandfather and his young family was moved to Dusseldorf where he had originated from, but they were unable to integrate into society as a Jewish English family in post-war Germany. Raphael's grandparents divorced, and his grandmother returned to London with his father, who would then *float between London and Dusseldorf as a child*. In London, Raphael's grandmother re-married and started a new family, and Raphael's father felt *unwanted*. One time Raphael's father returned from boarding school to find that his belongings had been put in *lodgings around the corner* from the family home and he was told that he could come home for dinners, but that he was *effectively chucked out from the family home*. Raphael describes his paternal grandmother as *not very maternal* and he imagines that this, along with an intergenerational pattern of absent fathers, contributed to

why his father *has had difficulties with his relationships with people and his children, because he's never had a strong parental influence of a loving family.*

Raphael's grandfather was sent to prison in Germany in 1968 for bankruptcy, which was a criminal offence at the time. He committed suicide in prison one year later by hanging himself, when Raphael's father was in his early twenties.

*And, my grandfather was the sort of, from what I hear about him, you know, he's always been set up in our family as this sort of very charismatic, charming, man you know? Immaculate suits, and there's lovely photographs of him and we was always, I suppose, coached to, well not 'hero-worship' this guy, but, that he was someone to be looked up to and admired for, because he was very good with business and certain things, and, it was very hard to, you couldn't refer to, I mean (strained voice), my other brothers they would refer to him by his first name, but if my father heard anyone call his father by his first name, sort of, 'no, that's your Opa', your grandfather, then he would get quite annoyed...*

Raphael had never asked his father about his grandfather's suicide because he felt it would *open up old wounds* and his father had never directly spoken to him about it. It was a taboo subject in the family and there was nobody for Raphael to ask. He and his two older brothers were told as children that his grandfather had died of cancer.

*I think he felt very embarrassed about it, very ashamed, uh, and had a lot of emotional issues surrounding the death of his father... It's something I would never, ever mention to my father. It's never come up in discussion and it's something I don't want to hurt him with... because I'm sure it must have been a very, very painful memory for him because he would have only been about twenty-three when it happened. He was newly married with two children himself. And to lose your father... and already coming from a very, very small*



*family, you know, you've only got an aunt and uncle left, and that is it. It must have been very bewildering for him...*

*..My dad was in his twenties with no advice or guidance to fall back on... So, I don't even know how to talk to my dad about that. And I don't think he's the sort of bloke that can, he would be mortified if I mentioned it I think. Very embarrassed.*

Raphael described his conflicting experiences of *being brought up to think of (his grandfather) as a mythical sort of hero like figure* whereas his mother expressed that there was another side to his Grandfather: *He was nice but he was a very selfish man.*

For Raphael, hearing this 'fuller' picture of his grandfather was *difficult because I suppose you want to believe that, especially when you're told "oh, you look a lot like him" you want to hear the good things about this man. And my other grandfather, he was a really, really wonderful man but I seem to want to put my other (paternal) grandfather on an equal standing with grandad, but... I don't want there to be a good grandad and a bad grandad.*

Raphael reflected upon his father's disjointed childhood that lacked a family home and so, as a parent he did not value the 'home.' It was Raphael's mother that *brought that side in.* Raphael recalled that father related to his sons in a formal manner, without much affection or emotional sensitivity.

Raphael described how his father would lose control of his anger, especially behind the wheel, when he would *get road rage* and get into physical confrontations. For this reason Raphael always felt vulnerable in the car and chose not to learn to drive himself until his thirties.

Raphael described his father as patriarchal:

*Dad was head of the family,*

*And his word is law.*

*He would tell us:*

*“Don’t do as I do, do as I say.”*

*And we were expected to doff the cap...*

*He used to be a very intimidating figure for a child.*

*He could be quite violent-*

*I felt vulnerable because of dad’s violence.*

*There was no thinking of the consequences.*

*Afterwards I had anger*

*Violent thoughts towards my dad...*

Raphael identified elements within his own character that he associated with his father.

At work, Raphael has a *very low threshold patience level*, and has to work hard to control his temper; *I just want to go ‘bang’ with anger*. Raphael notices that he takes criticisms personally; problems that arise feel like a personal failure.

Raphael noticed his conflict between feeling pride that his father gave him this *torch to carry* and feelings that his connection to their family history felt special; whilst at the same time he noticed that his older brothers are not burdened in the same way. Speaking of one of his brothers, he said: *You can’t emulate his ease in society*.

Raphael said that he feels a close bond to his father, describing how, as a small child, they would sit and chat together in a shared bubble bath, and how even today, as an adult, he enjoys taking a long bath on a Sunday, using the same German bath jelly that his father

always used. Raphael was quick to say, however, that a lot of other experiences of his father were *laced with negativities of some ilk...* Raphael really struggled to explain this 'negativity' that he feels now to be a part of him:

*I wish that I could put you in my heart,*

*So that you could feel this feeling...*

*I can't find the words in English.*

*I can only say*

*That because there's been so much pain,*

*Lack of continuity*

*And stability...*

Raphael trailed off, looking emotional as he clearly struggled to put words to his experience of what he feels he has taken '*right into his heart*'.

The holocaust first came into Raphael's consciousness when he was at primary school. He wondered why, during the religious assembly when Christian hymns were being sung, he and another boy from his class were asked to either sit at the back or to go outside. He remembered asking his *very kind teacher*, who answered:

*Well it's actually because you are Jewish. And I didn't understand what that meant, you know, I'm only five or six, and you know, what does being Jewish mean?*

Raphael remembered asking his father, who explained *where they were from*. His father brought out a big envelope, which contained the black and white photograph that his grandfather had been holding on the train when he left Europe; *the only thing that he came out of Germany with*. It was a family photograph of his grandfather as a small boy, with his

parents and his siblings. Raphael describes his astonishment at seeing the likeness between himself and his great grandfather.

During Raphael's teens and twenties, researching his father's family became very important to him. The limitations to what he was able to find from European records proved frustrating. He likens the experience to *running into a brick wall*.

*I can only say I've felt cheated and robbed...*

*I feel that my heritage has been stolen from me.*

*That I can't go back,*

*That I don't know how to go back.*

*That's why I drew a broken tree-stump.*

*And the reason why I drew the trunk off to the side*

*With no leaves or boughs or anything like that*

*Because for me that's the image that came to my mind*

*Because that's unknown,*

*So the family literally starts from the stump.*

*There are no cultural, historic connections to family traditions*

*Or what went on*

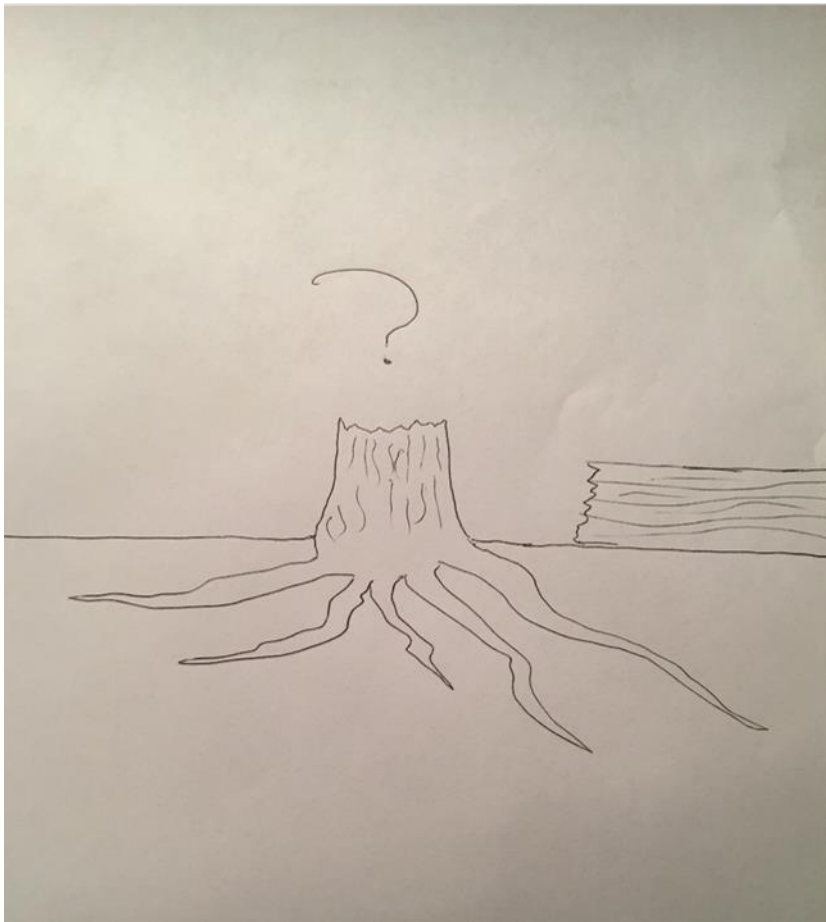
*And what's been passed on.*

*That line for me is dead.*

*There is no,*

*There is nothing past that stump.*

*It's cold and calculated against.*



The above picture depicts Raphael's representation of his relationship with his family history. He explained that his grandfather's descendants (himself, his brothers and his brother's children) were *completely disjointed in the sense that there is no connection to that cultural identity, pre-war.*

Raphael's grandfather, his father, and Raphael have all been a member of a synagogue, but his brothers, who do have children, were not. He shared with us his fears that their cultural identity will be lost with the next generation:

*They will be completely assimilated. There is no interest in what would have been on top of that stump had it - because it's not - there are no reinforcements of identity, because, there*

*was no one there to imprint that on family members. If I have children then I suppose it will imprint on them because, I would, out of my two brothers, it would be myself that would focus the attention on that line. Whereas, for them, it's not so important, they're more in the here and now, and how to live life now, and to survive. I suppose they've switched themselves off to that line and they don't identify with it. So, as far as their children are concerned, it's a dead history.*

Raphael felt that his father put more weight on him being the *torch bearer* of the family because he expressed interest as a child:

*I suppose for him I was the natural choice to be told stories and related this oral tradition of what happened to our family... But my brothers... they don't want to think about it. It's not that they don't care about it but for them they don't want to think about it. It's not our lives. It's happened... it's nothing to do with us in our lives now. So they've got almost a very divorced take on it but I take it very personally and I get very, very angry and I also have some very violent thoughts about these people – what you'd like to do to them.*

Raphael reflected that his anger is mostly directed at those who had the power to act, but did nothing. Raphael's anger is palpable at times in the groups, and he explained that he has had to learn to defend himself:

*Growing up as the only Jewish kid in school, you had to learn to fight, because if you never knocked that kid out, your life was a misery. So, I'm quite a small guy so I have to get that punch in first, you know, and bop someone on the nose and they leave you alone as they think don't touch him as he will fight.*

Raphael told a story of being attacked by a group of children when he was about ten years old on a family skiing trip in Austria. He described being singled out as Jewish by the other children.

*And I remember once this young boy,  
Johann was his name,  
He was a couple of years older I think  
– I thought ‘oh I’ve made a friend’,  
And then suddenly I was surrounded by four or five German boys  
And I knew I was in for a kicking.  
I just knew it.  
Because they managed to trap me on the stairs.  
On this little landing.  
And there was no escape.  
I was stuck at the top,  
I just got pinned down  
And  
Talking about resignation,  
I just resigned myself that I was going to take a kicking.  
And my god did I take a kicking.  
I went back to my parents’ suite black and blue and bleeding  
And...  
Um,  
You know  
From the walloping they gave me.  
Oh yeah...*

*I mean don't get me wrong*

*I gave as good as I got.*

*But,*

*I can remember now being pinned against the wall.*

*And I was kicking them*

*And one boy grabbed my legs*

*And pushed me against a wall*

*And then this big bird came up,*

*And she must have been about 14 or 15*

*– Big, ugly German teenage girl*

*With acne*

*And she just went wallop.*

*Slammed me right in the mouth,*

*First one echoed*

*And split my mouth open*

*And I just remember*

*Thinking,*

*There is nothing I can do,*

*There is nothing I can do,*

*I just have to take this walloping*

*And I can just remember*

*Being held against this wall*

*And being punched*

*And kicked*

*And...*

*I can picture myself there now*



*Just thinking,*

*There was nothing I can do...*

*I just have to accept...*

Raphael realised that his generation were the *last link of relating from first source points of view*. He felt that his connection to his ancestors had been severed, and the hours of research trying to recover his lost history had not given him the sort of fulfilment he sought. He yearned to hear *someone's voice telling you about someone who lived and breathed and what their experience was*.

For Raphael, his research was a re - searching for connection with *living, breathing people who experienced happiness, sadness and... my disconnection from that is because it has just made a black and white list of names; dozens and dozens of names and there is no one left to say: "Oh, that person used to do this, or they were like this as a person... Because obviously if you're a descendent of someone, certain traits will flow through the family and for me, that's what I miss and don't get out of it, it's not so much the historical research, which is fascinating, it's the fact that the personalisation of all of these people, their humanity, has been taken away*.

At another point Raphael spoke of *the most wonderful experience* he had the previous year when had been able to find a distant relative who was still alive in America, and he spoke with her on the telephone: *She was able to put flesh on bones and share her experience... She gave me a wealth of information and it was nice to hear someone's voice who actually met someone who was alive in this photograph*.

Raphael described a *binding image* of his father:

*My mother can serve him soup straight off the hob  
And it's literally steaming and bubbling away,  
And he is very quickly eating this burning hot soup down,  
And we all say to him,  
You must have a mouth of asbestos  
How can you eat like that?  
Because it must burn your throat,  
"And he says:  
'Nah,  
I've always done it'  
And I said:  
'Why?'  
And he said:  
'Well...'  
And I think it's something that's come through from his father and his father,  
Because my father said that his father said it,  
And his father said to him,  
Which was,  
'Eat quick, the Cossacks are coming...'  
That saying just always stuck with me,  
You know,  
If I'm blessed one day with children  
It's something I would like to pass down the same,  
Because I feel that,  
You know,  
All we've got is a photograph,*

*But you know that one phrase that's come through and stuck through all these generations,*

*It's almost like an inheritance.*

When asked to choose an object to represent their Holocaust histories, Raphael picked up a wooden owl:

*Well I think we all know what the owl represents. Wisdom and... for me, that represents the loss of wisdom; my family had to start again on the shores of England in 1939, and the loss of all the experience and the wealth of knowledge that my grandfather and his brother, coming here on Kinder transport, missed out on, from their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles – you know, that has trickled down to this generation. The fact that, you know, my grandfather died so young – that he wasn't able to pass on his knowledge in as much as he could have done to my father. The fact that he wasn't there to teach my father to be a father, so much, and that my father had to find his own way – good or bad – and what it's meant to him as a father.*

## Stephen

Stephen arrived for the first focus group visibly hot and breathless from cycling to the group from his home on the other side of London. He talked about his dangerous journey, having to *fight off the maniacal bus and taxi drivers* that want him in *two pieces*. Stephen explained that he chose not to wear a helmet whilst cycling, as he believes that his increased vulnerability prompts drivers to take more care around him.

Stephen only attended the first two focus group meetings; he dropped out of the third meeting, only letting me know once the group had begun that he would not make it, as he had *lost track of time* after meeting a friend.

During the ice-breaker question in which he introduced his name, Stephen said that he likes his name, and has a strong attachment to it. Stephen explained: *It upsets me when people forget my name after an evening of interacting with me, and lots of chances to get that subtle question in, and then leave it to the end; "I've forgotten your name by the way." Ugh, you know, that upsets me. I'm quite sensitive about that, I have been in the past quite sensitive about that.*

When Stephen described his family tree, he compared it to another member's diagram that he noticed was *much neater* than his: *Yours is all pretty, mine's just... khhhh*. (He moved his arms and made a hard 'k' that sounded like an explosion).

His narrative of his family's history was sparse:

*I can't remember my maternal grandmother's name. Um... My grandfather came from an orthodox family in Warsaw, and with lots and lots of brothers and sisters I think, more than*

*ten, lost them all, in the camps. Um, and moved to Israel with his wife who is also a survivor but she died in the 70s and I did know her name but I've forgotten it. Um, my mother was born in 1948, 47, sorry...*

Stephen admitted that he did not know much about his family's experience during the holocaust, which he put down to his "*defence mechanisms*" rather than a lack of interest:

*Cos that stuff is really scary,*

*Really scary.*

*And very intense.*

*I wouldn't say I was a rebellious kid,*

*But I was sort of an arrogant kid,*

*In that I didn't think-*

*I didn't care,*

*About things.*

*And this thing was like looming large,*

*In my subconscious,*

*You know as something I ought to care about,*

*But it was almost like a rebellious thing that I would never-*

*I would listen but I would never ask questions.*

*Because I didn't really want to know.*

*Probably because it was too much,*

*And it was only when that kind of stayed the same*

*And then in my later life in my twenties*

*I started to realise this stuff is really quite important,*

*That I should know about it,*

*And it's still a balance.*

Stephen's father's family, who were living in Italy before the start of the Second World War, denounced their Jewishness and stopped practicing their religion. Stephen's father *carried that through* and showed *no interest whatsoever in community or culture* whilst Stephen was growing up. Stephen explains that he shares his father's view that all religion is harmful; *I have a fair bit of disdain for religion.*

This was in contrast to his mother, who took him to Jewish Sunday school and to synagogue, which Stephen remembers negatively, describing feelings of isolation and bewilderment during services when he had to be separated from his mother as she sat in the upstairs gallery with the other women, and he sat amongst the praying men in the main area of the synagogue. He recalls thinking to himself: *This is nothing to do with me.* Speaking of his mother, Stephen says: *She wanted me to have a connection.*

Stephen was unable to communicate verbally with his holocaust survivor grandfather who had moved to Israel from Poland either during or after the holocaust. He had never learnt English, and Stephen's Hebrew was *barely conversational*. Stephen felt an *unspoken connection* with his grandfather, nonetheless, who he felt loved by, and who he felt *at home* with.

*He probably experienced something similar which is that we didn't feel that close, on the surface, but I did feel something, some strong level of closeness to him, a non-verbal closeness that didn't really manifest itself in any real way whatsoever... but um, it's to my shame, to this day, and forever that I didn't see it through and didn't learn better Hebrew cos I really wanted to develop a closer relationship with him.*

Stephen remembered visiting Israel as a child. While they watched international football games, Stephen sat with his grandfather, *feeling awkward* as he was unable to communicate. *He'd say like "Svetzia" and I was like, "oh Sweden" – and that was like our moment of minimal communication and he'd have this smile that – you could see that smile and you would want that moment to continue – but that would sort of be it.*

Stephen's grandfather wrote a detailed journal about his experience in Warsaw before, during and after the Second World War. Stephen's mother translated the journal into English and made special copies for close family. Stephen described how this book has been *doing the rounds* in his family, and he felt shame that he has had the book for over ten years but has only read it once.

*But it's just something that is so intense for me,*

*And I've got enough stuff,*

*I've always had enough mental issues separate from anything else like that going on,*

*And it's sort of been like,*

*'When I'm ready',*

*And I'm kind of ready,*

*And getting more ready,*

*...to,*

*Erm,*

*Acknowledge the severity,*

*The gravity of what happened.*

*... It would have seemed like I didn't care*

*But I just wasn't ready to care.*

*If that makes sense.*

When we met individually after the focus groups, Stephen explained that he was *still keeping things at arm's length* as a way to protect himself as he already can often feel emotionally distressed, therefore chose to *skip this bit* as a way to protect himself.

In the focus group, however, Stephen expressed feelings of shame that he does not engage with his family's history enough. He reflected that the majority of his friends are not Jewish, and that his few Jewish friends do not tend to *sit down and have deep and meaningful discussions about this sort of thing*. Stephen did not feel that he had many opportunities to engage with this topic, and he saw that taking part in the research and the focus groups, was one such opportunity.

Only in recent years had Stephen felt that he has wanted to engage with his family's connection to the holocaust. As a child, his mother had encouraged him to be more curious and ask questions about the family's history and experiences. He felt that his mother did a *reverse job of protecting* him and his brother:

*She was very connected to it...*

*And she was fairly keen for me to develop my own knowledge*

*And appreciation*

*And feeling*

*And I was just too emotionally immature.*

*But on the other hand*

*Both my parents tried to protect me from other stuff*

*That I didn't want to be protected from,*

*That I wanted to be involved in,*

*So I felt an imbalance there.*



*The wrong way round.*

*I wanted to be protected from the really scary,*

*Vast pain of my family's history*

*But I wanted to be involved with the present.*

*But they wanted it the other way around.*

*They wanted to protect me from the present*

*And involve me in the past,*

*So I felt like there was a little bit of a disconnect*

*From me to them*

*And them to me...*

When we met individually after the focus groups, Stephen said that he is a person of extremes, which seemed to mirror his parents' opposing positions.

Stephen described his father as fearful; *the fear passed on, I've got a lot of fear.*

Stephen described his father as

*Fearful of stepping outside...*

*Dad was scared of a lot of stuff –*

*Of people...*

*I was scared of him,*

*His temper was terrible.*

*He taught me to be afraid,*

*And alert to the ways in which others might take advantage of you.*

In contrast, Stephen remembered his mother as tolerant and open, and not afraid of others. He recalled that she was *outgoing and gregarious*. He reflected on his *conclusions about the world* that he shares his father, about religion in particular. He described his own tendency to withdraw, relating this when we met individually, to his recent move out of London to a more rural location. He spoke about his own conflict between feeling alone and missing his friends, but also wanting to *shut myself away from the world* which he can sometimes find *all a bit intense and scary*. He noticed that he does not share his mother's *bigger sense of belonging in community* and he described his relationship with her as confusing, as they had less in common.

*I never felt like I belonged to any one group. It's a shame... I don't expect to have any one healthy social group I can rely on...* Later on Stephen re-framed this lack of belonging as he described that *the world is big and beautiful* and as a citizen of the wider world, he doesn't want to be *stuck in one group*.

Stephen described one way in which he did feel connected to his mother, through their shared values of *not wasting*.

*My mum was very much trying to make every meal last as long as possible, and if there was God forbid any food that had to go wasted it went into the compost heap, which contributed to the little garden and they would grow plants, and she was very strong on that, on the not wasting food, preparing food for the week and not letting food go off...*

*Well I hate food being wasted.*

*With a passion,*

*It upsets me on a deeply subconscious and conscious level at the same time (laughs)*

*Without any sort of political motivation behind it,  
 My political motivation almost comes from that  
 – I'm very 'green' and a 'save the earth kind of person,'  
 And try to cycle and not drive to places as far as I can,  
 But I wonder how much that's come from,  
 Um,  
 A subconscious desire just to not waste anything.*

Stephen's mother had passed away two years ago, and on the anniversary of her birthday he visited Israel where he met a lot of his mother's friends that she grew up with. He described the visit as very emotional, and reflected on his plane journey home, as he watched the movie 'Woman in Gold'.

*I've never cried on a plane before,  
 But I was just sort of,  
 Arms like this (lifts his hands to his head),  
 Cos I was bawling in tears,  
 I can't remember whether it was a good film or not,  
 It could have been an average or bad or good film  
 I can't remember it all  
 I just remember almost every moment,  
 Just –  
 An emotional punch in the chest  
 And just being a wilting,  
 Withering wreck of,*

*Of...*

*Please no-one look at how much I'm quite loudly crying,*

*But yeah.*

The movie "The Woman in Gold" narrated the true story of a second generation holocaust survivor, whose determination to fight for retribution for her family's losses ends in her recovering valuable art stolen from her family by the Nazis. Stephen went on to talk about the responsibility that he feels, as a member of the third generation:

*I feel like we have a very strong responsibility to remember, to remember individuals, to remember the enormity of the scale. To remember the history and politics of the situation – as a warning against random scary events like the government telling companies to list how many foreign workers they've got. I don't know if anyone has been keeping up on the news but, just to say from time to time; 'Hey guys this is reminiscent of a hundred years ago or eighty years ago'...*

*...It's within my family's memory and I feel a duty to make sure that these things are remembered because they will die out. You know, they will. It's inevitable there are atrocities that are not remembered at all by anyone, or not mentioned...*

Stephen spoke about feeling a really strong sense of anger when –

*Not when I think about it,*

*So much as when I see vestiges of it today...*

A few days ago Stephen had seen a guy walking around shirtless; "like big beefy muscly guy in Acton with a swastika tattooed across his knuckles and his chest... I just got so very angry – I don't know if it's my duty to get angry in that situation as it's not really achieving anything

*but it's more of a reaction than a rational dutiful response as much but just to try and be the gatekeeper to civilisation - that's what it feels like to me...*

*... We have to stand up.*

*We are the ones it affects now.*

*We are basically the only ones left that it affects*

*Unless our parents are around.*

*But we're the ones who are approaching power.*

*The generation that is most meaningful,*

*Coming up anyway.*

*And we're the ones who need to stand up*

*And be counted*

*And not cowed down.*

*And I feel a strong sense of duty to my family and to..."*

Stephen referred to a poem: "*First they came for...*" written by the German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller (1892–1984). It was written about the cowardice of German intellectuals following the Nazis' rise to power and subsequent purging of their chosen targets, group after group.

'First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.’

*I think it's maybe reactionary on my part but the first line of that fable or story or whatever it is; I'm standing up. I'm saying something because it's not like I look everywhere and see Nazism everywhere or anti-Semitism everywhere, but when I do see it, it infuriates me and... yeah. I have a strong sense of need to take charge. It's not even about, you know, getting to the last bit; "then they came for me" – it's not even about that. I'm like - that doesn't matter. The point of that story is what goes around, comes around, I think - and we're supposed to be there for everyone and not just the Jews and not just our family but to... speak up when we see something – persecution of any form that could, unchecked, can become anything not even like what our families went through – just whatever we deem unacceptable.*

Stephen reflected that his feelings of anger can drive him to notice injustice and to talk a lot. He feels like he should perhaps re-direct this energy *to go to the gym more and do more classes and stuff.*

*It gets me talking about the labour party for example and refusing to back down in verbal confrontations sometimes. Because I feel to back down is to invite, sometimes in this horribly harsh world. And I'm doing it partly out of the sense of defending others because of this idea that I'm strong enough and I can take it.*

*People will give me shit about this and the fact that I don't go to shul. I don't spend much time in Jewish circles. I'm not really much of a target at all. I don't get victimised for being Jewish, almost ever... I don't want to start a vigilante group let alone join a vigilante group...*

*I do have these fantasies of violence as well.*

*Of some,*

*Not as revenge*

*But just putting people in their place*

*When they think it's okay to walk around with a Nazi tattoo on their chest,*

*A swastika on their chest,*

*I feel someone just needs to do something and why not me?*

During the closing minutes of the second focus group, Stephen reflected upon his role in relating to a future fourth generation. He commented that he did not intend on marrying a Jewish woman, or sending his children to a Jewish school. He questioned however, whether he might hold some responsibility to relate to them the family's history:

*So how would we relate to our children..? How would I relate that story of my own grandfather...? Do I have a duty to talk to them about it in the same ways our - the generation that came before us - did they feel it was an important thing or did they want to protect us? I guess I've not thought a lot about that...*

## Group Dynamics and Unspoken Process

For pragmatic reasons I have included only two stories from the focus group process as examples, with the entire narrative of the three focus groups included under appendix 5.

### Example Story from Focus Group One:

As my co-participants took turns to describe their diagrams, using them as a gateway into their grandparents' stories, I noticed the differences between the ways that they presented their family histories.

I was struck by Ilana's description of her maternal grandmother as "not a real survivor" and I wondered how this might impact upon Lex, who had emailed me prior to the group to ask me if her Grandparents 'counted' as survivors as they had travelled to England as refugees. What 'counts' as a survivor became a topic of conversation in the room:

Ilana: *"...But the truth is, she was out of Europe at the time of the war, so I don't know what you would class as a survivor."*

Me: *"That's an interesting question. I don't know if anyone else has any thoughts about that. In some ways, was she a refugee?"*

Ilana: *"I don't know, huh."*

Raphael: *"Well, I personally, can I introject? I would say she is a survivor. Because she existed at a time when that persecution was going on. And just because she never went to a camp, or a ghetto, or whatever social class she belonged to at the time, I think if you've been through that and your family has been affected, then... I mean, because my own Grandfather, he never went to any concentration camps but he still experienced as a child, persecution from the Nazi regime so, I would say yes, she's a survivor."*



Raphael stood up for his Grandfather's experiences to be legitimised. Later, I reflected on the repeated de-legitimisation that was a part of his family narrative, as his family were forced to give up their family name, and have their citizenship revoked. Here he stood up for himself and for his Grandfather. I notice that Lex stayed quiet in this direct interaction, and I wondered what she might be thinking. I decided to give her some time to choose when to bring herself in, especially this early in the group, and Stephen went next to introduce his diagram. He spoke directly to Ilana:

Stephen: *"-Well yours is much neater than mine. Yours is all pretty, mine's just pheuhhh"* (He raised his arms upwards and outwards, as he made a noise that sounds like an explosion).

Stephen presented as somewhat confused about the details of his family narrative, such as names and dates and there was a sense of incoherence in his narrative that made it challenging to write up in his narrative representation. When Raphael spoke about his family he referred to many names, dates and places. I found his lengthy account somewhat hard to follow, however, and it was only when I was listening to the tape at home, that I was impacted by the tragic sadness of Raphael's story of loss and abandonment. In my journal notes that I made later on, I reflect on how, in the room, I had felt unaffected by his story, eager to move on as he was speaking, and I wondered what it was within Raphael's communication that felt difficult to stay with.

#### Example Story from Focus Group Three:

The last focus group took place on a cold day at the end of November. As I let myself in the garden gate using the set of keys given to me by the studio owner, I froze as her dog came bounding towards me, teeth bared and barking loudly, inches from my body. I stayed frozen for a couple of seconds, terrified, reminding myself that the aggression is all show, and no bite. My heart was still pounding in my chest but as I gained control of my faculties, I spoke

softly to her and walked slowly and calmly toward the studio, all the while the dog followed me, barking loudly. I went inside and call the owner. She was away from London, and she apologised before telephoning her daughter to ask her to call the dog back into the house. She had forgotten about my group this evening. Once inside the studio I found that the four small electric heaters had not been turned on, and I could see my breath forming in the air in front of me. I turned on the little electric heaters, and hoped that the room would be warmed by the time people arrive.

By seven o'clock, everybody was present except for Stephen. I was unsure whether to wait, or start without him.

Me: "... he (Stephen) has texted today saying 'see you later' but I don't want to keep you here later than need be, so we'll start and I'm sure he'll just come in and join us."

Ilana: "Do you get nervous that you text us in the week?" (Giggles)

Lex: "Like we'll forget"

Me: "Well, you never know! Assuming we've all got busy... What's it like that I text you?"

Ilana: "I don't know I just think that you get nervous that I've forgotten or something, and I'm like, don't worry! – I know, it's in my diary" (giggles)

Ilana and Lex had noticed my anxiety that the focus group will slip from their minds.

Me: "It is cold in here (then looking up at the thermostat) It's heated up, it's nearly 15' or 16' now." I felt cold, yet when I check the thermometer it was actually not that cold. What was the cold that I am feeling?

Ilana: "I tend to find that these things get very hot though, and I don't really like it when it gets too hot."

Me: "I can watch the temperature and I can turn it down then... "

Ilana: "My house gets boiling, I can't bare it."

I wondered what Ilana might have also been saying about the emotional 'heat' in her house. What couldn't she bare? When she remarked: "I find these things get very hot," I imagined that she was also referring to the group, and I wondered about what it might have been in the last group that she could have experienced as having been emotionally 'hot' so that there was so much anxiety left over. Later on as I reviewed the transcript from the second group, I felt puzzled as I searched for clues in the narratives and was left wondering about what was unspoken in the room. I wondered whether there was a sense of foreboding as we were coming to the last focus group.

When I told Ilana that "I can watch the temperature and turn it down" I was also offering reassurance that I could contain the strong feelings and maintain safety.

Whilst we waited, still hoping that Stephen would arrive, Ilana asked me questions about my day; what time I arrived in the studio, and what I did there whilst I was waiting for the co-participants to arrive. I explained how I came face to face with the dog that day...

Me: "Ilana I can see the fear in your face!" Ilana: "I wouldn't have come! I have a fear of dogs. I've had therapy" Raphael: "Really?! Bad experience as a child?" Ilana: "Duno... No-one knows. I've just always been scared of dogs... I've nearly been attacked by a dog, but because I was running from it, it was horrible, you know Bull-dogs, and they're really horrible."

Fear still seemed to be the dominant theme in the room. It seemed to be rather nameless and floating, and hard for me to pin down within any one narrative.

## (7) DISCUSSION

*“History is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation.” (Caruth, 1996: 71)*

In these final chapters, I present the eight themes that emerged across the narratives through an ‘analysis of the narratives’ or ‘thinking with the stories’ in which the content of the stories were examined and considered (Etherington, 2004). Although each story is unique, all of my co-participants and I share the common experience of being grandchildren of holocaust survivors and therefore some of the themes that appear across all or most of the narratives are worth consideration as issues that might tell us something about the experience of being a third generation survivor of political violence such as the holocaust.

The table in Appendix 11 contains an over-view of themes, categories, and example codes. Please see Appendix 10 for a colour-coded map of the eight themes, categories, and all of the codes.

### **Knowing / Not Knowing about the Holocaust**

Knowing versus not-knowing about their family’s holocaust experience is a theme that appears across all of the co-participants’ narratives. In his longitudinal and multi-generational study involving holocaust survivor families, Bar-On (1995) described ‘knowing’ as the first stage of working through for the third generation, defined as an awareness of what happened during the holocaust, and if their family was involved, what happened to them. The findings of the current study would suggest that a binary differentiation of ‘worked through’ versus ‘not worked-through’ is overly reductionist. Raphael still feels a great loss

and sense of disconnection around 'not knowing', despite his detailed factual awareness of what happened to his family during the holocaust. Ilana has grown up 'knowing' stories of the holocaust, having heard her family talk about the first generations' experiences from childhood. It would appear that she feels deeply connected to, and enriched by her history as she derives a sense of meaning from the past that guides her own life, whilst also feeling burdened and preoccupied with the past. Ilana experiences frustration with those who know less than her, and feels criticised by others for her 'obsession'. I therefore offer the possibility that 'knowing' can take different forms, and whilst there is a common assumption in the literature that building a narrative of the grandparents' historical experience is equal to a sort of mastery over one's past (Bar-On, 1995); there are inherent conflicts to be managed with either knowing or not knowing about one's holocaust history.

#### Knowing / Grandparent Verbal about Holocaust Experiences

Ilana first heard about the holocaust when she was approximately seven years old, as she heard her parents and grandparents talking about the gas chambers. In her study of third generation survivors, Gradwohl Pisano (2013) reflects upon the potential impacts of learning about the horrors of the holocaust at a young age, suggesting a greater risk of feelings of guilt, fear and shame being transmitted to children too young to learn to contain and incorporate such historical information into their identities. Ilana reflects upon feeling confused as a child, and she describes her memories as "fractured," perhaps suggesting difficulties in integrating this experience. She tells us that the holocaust takes over her thoughts, and she struggles to put it aside, even on her dating profile where she disclosed that her interests included the holocaust: "What else am I going to say, 'I like skiing'?" Ilana appears to feel criticised by others for her preoccupation, which plays out in the group in the final meeting (see appendix 5). It occurs to me that perhaps Ilana does not experience the freedom to 'just' like skiing, as her family history takes up a large space in her sense of self. I

later discuss the more positive aspects of how her grandparents' survival story has become sewn into her self-narrative.

### Not Knowing / Family Silence around Holocaust Experience

Despite being able to relay factual information that he has gathered during his own research, Raphael speaks of his frustration and loss around his attempts to learn more about his family. He feels literally and figuratively 'stumped' in his attempts to connect the dots of his disrupted family narrative. Raphael feels that he has missed out on the sense of inheritance and connection that comes from hearing the personal stories that grandparents might usually tell their grandchildren. Raphael talks about the silence within his family around his grandfather's suicide, a subject he has never brought up with his father, as he is aware that it would be too hurtful. This is evocative of the 'double wall of silence' between generations as they work to protect the other by not mentioning the unspeakable (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004).

Auerhahn and Laub (1998: 365) describe how, in families that did not discuss the survivors' holocaust experiences, children were exposed just as much to what is *not* said: "It is a knowledge that engulfs the child who does not know what to do with a knowledge that he or she cannot yet grasp." I believe that Raphael feels impacted and engulfed by a knowledge he cannot describe, which is particularly apparent when he tells me that he wishes he could 'show me inside his heart'.

Lex reflects upon how as a child, her family did not talk to her about her grandparents' experiences as a way of protecting her from the realities that she could not yet fully understand. Lex appears to inhabit a less conflicted position around her own not-knowing, which I understand in the context of her otherwise close family relationships with members of

the first and second generation, as well as a strong connection with the wider Jewish community. When feeding back on her experience of the focus groups, Lex expressed how she felt the absence of her knowledge in comparison to others within the group, and I wondered if a feeling of shame around not-knowing may have contributed to her taking a more quiet position within the group.

Stephen reflects that 'knowing' was not always helpful, and silence can be a way to protect others. He comments: "It's often a selfish thing to tell the truth when you don't need to." Other third generation voices in the literature seem to echo this sentiment: "Some truths better left uncovered, some stories better unfinished" (Lukas, 2016: 109). Stephen reflects further that his mother did a 'reverse job' of protecting both him and his brother. Stephen's parents attempted to involve him in the family history, which he did not feel emotionally ready for, whilst shutting him out of other areas of family life that he wanted to be involved in. This is different to Lex's experience, who felt involved in ordinary family life. Speaking from the position of 'knowing' Ilana states: "I don't feel like I wasn't protected but I don't feel like I was protected. It just was a fact."

Experts in the field discuss silence as the conduit for trauma, but also discuss the protective function of silence in families: "Silence may be a conditional, agentic choice rather than always a defensive absence or unconscious denial... rather silence is a way to protect the next generation, from what is (im)possible to say" (Frankish & Bradbury, 2012: 302). Therefore moving from viewing silence as merely pathological, to an adaptive and protective mechanism is important in de-pathologising the third generation and their families.

#### Ambivalence around Knowing - Not Knowing

Both Lex and Stephen have experienced ambivalence around 'knowing,' for example Lex describes how she hasn't chosen to 'deeply engage' with the family holocaust history. Now

she feels an expectation upon her to lead the dialogue and ask questions. Not engaging with his family holocaust history is also presented by Stephen as a way of coping.

It seems that for both Stephen and Lex, their ambivalent relationships towards their family histories are closely tied to protective strategies, but also carry conflictual feelings. Stephen describes his feelings of guilt and shame at not finding out more, not learning Hebrew so that he could speak to his grandfather, and not reading the book that his relatives have written about the family history. Meanwhile Lex describes an obligation that she does not know how to uphold. She describes being more ready than ever to 'engage' with her history, but cannot articulate what that would mean.

### **Affect and Post-Holocaust Adaptive Strategies**

Affect featured heavily across the co-participant narratives, both as direct expressions of emotion and more implicit presentation of feelings within the group. The most commonly appearing emotions included fear, anger, grief/loss, shame/guilt and positive affect such as pride and joy.

I believe that the high prevalence of emotion within my co-participants' accounts can be most usefully considered by placing emotion within its well established theoretical context as a psychophysiological, motivational and evolutionary system that is inextricably connected to survival. Emotion alerts us to potential threats in the environment (e.g. fear and anger); drives us to avoid situations which might be relationally risky (e.g. disconnecting affect such as shame and guilt) and directs affiliative attachment behaviour (e.g. positive affect such as pride and joy) (Panksepp, 2012; Gilbert, 2019).



From Van der Hart et al's (2006) work with people who have experienced extreme deprivation and repeated abuse, three levels of dissociation have been delineated as a way of surviving and adapting to life after extreme trauma. Division between different action systems for defense against threat, and for functioning in daily life become unduly rigid and closed to one another; the traumatised self holds the affect whilst another part of the self continues with the tasks of daily living. It is possible that for my co-participants, there has been greater integration of affect that was previously split off.

It therefore seems pertinent to consider the emotional expression of my co-participants as evidence of human survival mechanisms, adapted to account for ancestral trauma, rather than a sign of pathology that has been inherited. As Nicole Krauss (2017: 147) explains; her work as a third generation artist is less to do with the Holocaust itself, and more about “a response to catastrophic loss” and starting life again. The same can be said for this research project and my co-participants' narratives.

### Fear

Echoing previous research on the third generation, fear and anger are prevalent in the narratives of my co-participants (Foisson et al, 2003), Stephen reflects upon his fear of engaging with his history: “Cos that stuff is really scary, really scary, and very intense.” I have wondered whether engaging in the focus groups could have been scary and intense for Stephen, hence why he did not return for the third meeting. Whilst he did not offer this explanation when we met to de-brief, it is possible that protecting himself may have been an unconscious influence upon his early disengagement. In the final meeting, fear appeared to be overtly present in the group dialogue, and Ilana referred to her dislike of it when “these things get very hot.” Whilst she was talking about the heaters, I have wondered whether she was indirectly referring to the intensity that this topic can bring, and how it has the potential to overwhelm.

Stephen is articulate of the fear he has “inherited” from his father:

“He taught me to be afraid,

And alert to the ways in which others might take advantage of you.”

According to trauma expert Judith Herman, threat evokes intense feelings of fear and anger. These changes in arousal, attention, perception and emotion are normal, adaptive reactions in certain circumstances. They mobilize the threatened person for strenuous action, either in battle or in flight (Herman, 1997). In ‘Trauma and Recovery’ Judith Herman (1997) discusses how vigilance, as well as a freeze response where the individual does not reach out to others due to a lack of trust, is common after trauma as an adaptive response to threat. Herman describes how the survivor of trauma may find him or herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why. It seems as though Stephen’s father might have been caught in such a flight/fight or freeze response. Stephen’s words highlight how this adaptive response to threat has been taught by one generation to the next.

Stephen describes his tendency to withdraw from other people, finding himself caught between feeling alone, and avoiding others. Stephen’s father often shared his disdain of religion and community with Stephen, and this pattern appears to correlate with Stephen’s paternal grandparents’ flight one generation earlier as they disengaged from the Jewish community in Italy during times of persecution.

I believe that Stephen’s relational pattern can be meaningfully understood as a fearful avoidant attachment style and I propose that for Stephen, this way of relating is a coping mechanism learnt from his father. Bandura’s (1971) social learning theory offers one possible way of understanding how fear might have been taught by modelling this strategy to

his son. The view that inherent in insecure attachment styles, are survival mechanisms for coping with past trauma is widely agreed with by experts in the field (Siegal, 1999; Holmes, 2001).

Lex's expressions of caution appear to centre on being seen as different, and she takes special care when holding a position, both at school and in the workplace, but perhaps most evidently within her own family. Lex described her family's efforts to acclimatise and assimilate into a new host country as a 'key issue' for her grandparents. I wonder whether Lex's own process around being seen to be 'other' might also be an adaptation for survival that she learnt from the previous generations in her family, when blending in was an important strategy to feel safe. In this way, fear and anxiety have been transferred via evolved human mechanisms that protect future generations from threat, such as modelling and other implicit communications. By teaching future generations about past threats, we pass on protective adaptive strategies. In my own narrative, my hypervigilance to disaster, in particular my sensitivity to perceiving antisemitism can also be understood in this way.

In his book 'It Didn't Start with You,' Mark Wolynn (2016) describes a laboratory study at Emory University School of Medicine by Dias & Ressler (2013), in which rats who are conditioned to fear one particular scent, pass that fear on to subsequent generations due to sustained epigenetic changes that occur in DNA. A fear response is passed between generations as a way to communicate to future generations about an adverse environment and to build resilience. Rachel Yehuda's (2015) genetic 'environmental resilience' adds huge explanatory value to these findings, as she explains that a more reactive stress response is one way in which parent trauma is expressed intergenerationally as an evolutionary adaptive strategy to living in a post-holocaust world.

### Anger

Both Stephen and Raphael talk openly of their anger and even rage, expressed within fantasies of violence, for example when Stephen sees a man walking around with a swastika tattoo in West London where he lives: “I also have some very violent thoughts about these people – what you’d like to do to them.” Raphael’s anger is directed towards those who were bystanders at the time of the holocaust: “People who did nothing”. The anger expressed by both men seems tightly related to standing up against perceived injustice and Stephen particularly feels a sense of duty to stand up for others who struggle to find their own voice. This interesting gender difference in the expression of anger between the woman and men in the group warrants further exploration in future research, but I have wondered about the different role that the men might take in feeling responsible for protecting their families and communities.

One previous study involving grandsons only amongst the third generation living in the United States by Moskowitz (2016) refer to their finding of ‘macho revenge fantasies.’ Based upon the current study I reject this description as simplistic, as Ilana also expresses anger within her narrative, albeit in a more passive presentation. I do not believe it sufficient to describe my co-participants expressions of anger as ‘revenge fantasies’ but rather anger as a result of trauma; their own reactions to the impotency of previous generations to stand up and take a stand, to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities from the injustices that they faced. When Stephen refers to the poem by pastor Martin Niemoller - ‘At first they came for...’ - he explains the poem’s personal significance: “I think it’s maybe reactionary on my part but the first line of that fable or story or whatever it is; I’m standing up... I have a strong sense of need to take charge”.

Raphael reflects upon his father’s violence that intimidated him as a child, as well as the anger that he felt towards his father, and how his own anger can now spill over at work when

his patience is low, so that he “just want(s) to go bang”. Raphael also describes his fear when witnessing his father’s road rage whilst growing up, and his consequent avoidance of learning to drive himself. He, too, seems to have absorbed an avoidant coping strategy in the context of his relationship with his father.

Ilana expresses frustration with those who don’t know as much detail about the concentration camps as she does. Her anger appears to focus on her perception of a silence around the horrific events of the past. I also wondered whether she may feel anger, albeit unconsciously, for how much space that knowing *has* taken up in her life. Lex was careful to exclude statements of negativity in her narrative representation, suggesting a complex relationship with her own feelings of anger and her sense of freedom to express it.

Participants bring anger into the group in different forms, at times more overtly than others, but its indirect, implicit expression within the group and within the stories of my co-participants is noteworthy. If fearful avoidance is understood as an adaptive protective strategy passed between generations, it follows that for a generation with a family history defined by persecution for being ‘other,’ taking a position of anger or defiance could be experienced as a threat to themselves. I believe it pertinent to ask whether it might follow that open expressions of anger could be felt to be risky for a generation that have descended from the holocaust? In the case of the co-participants’ grandparents where a ‘fight’ response might have meant death, and where the silence of host communities following the holocaust meant that anger remained unresolved, the third generation are perhaps still in the process of integrating the anger of previous generations. Of course there were those survivors who were able to join resistance and partisan groups, for example my grandfather found a way to contribute towards resistance by joining the Russian communist forces.

The narratives of my co-participants, as well as my own, suggest that resilience in the form of 'fighting spirit' is passed between generations alongside the scars. It could be of interest for future research to investigate any potential links or protective factors between the opportunity to activate a fight response, and the narratives around anger for future generations.

### Grief/Loss

Raphael expresses painful feelings of loss in relation to his family history throughout his narrative. He feels the absence of male role models in his family, and is aware that the holocaust is to blame for all this loss: "I've felt cheated and robbed". Raphael reflects simply yet eloquently on the devastating impact upon his family; that his grandfather, separated from his own parents at the age of fourteen, repeated history with his own premature death, so that he "wasn't there to teach my father to be a father."

### Shame and Guilt

Fisher (2019) refers to the propensity to feel ashamed as directly related to another defensive strategy that can be considered a normal human response to trauma. Sitting alongside fight, flight or freeze, is the 'submit' strategy, which usually comes into effect when an individual feels helpless in the face of a threat, and cannot utilise other defensive strategies such as fight, flight or freeze. Shame and the passivity of the submit defensive strategy feeds a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. Raphael talks about helplessness, as well as standing up for himself, as a theme that starts in his childhood: "You had to learn to fight, because if you never knocked that kid out, your life was a misery." During the third and final focus group, Raphael described being attacked as a child in Vienna and his described movingly his realisation that "there was nothing he could do" but take the beating. He took care to stay behind to speak with me after the group as he was concerned that I would be left with the impression of him as a victim, which suggested to me that

feelings of shame had been activated for him and I took time to speak to him, reassuring him that I was not left with a view of him as a victim. It seems that for Raphael this is an ongoing conflict in his sense of self, perhaps a struggle with integrating the different parts of himself that respond to threat in different ways. Historian Michael Marrus (2016) suggests that descendants of holocaust survivors must deal with a transgenerational issue of overcoming humiliation, and that such burdens cannot be lightly cast off.

When we meet individually, Raphael reflects upon the sense of superiority amongst his family members, which is a common defensive response to shame (Young et al, 2003). Jewish 'specialness' comes into the co-participants' narratives at several times. Lex describes the strength of the Jewish community as special and different from other communities. I wonder if this perception of Jewish specialness could be a reaction to the deep narcissistic wounding of belonging to a group that has experienced centuries of persecution.

Stephen expresses feelings of guilt at his disengagement from his family's past, and Ilana says that she feels guilty for taking positive inspiration from the holocaust history. Ilana relates her own tendency to always be 'doing' and accomplishing as a response to the family myth that "we shouldn't be here." This can also be viewed as an adaptive response to the much written about 'survivor's guilt' complex, as well as to the shame and helplessness that results after humiliation (Goldberg, 1991).

### Pride and Joy

Ilana expresses her feelings of great pride in her grandfather. Her pride appears to stem from her perception of his resilience, and his ability to have lived a full life and achieved a great deal as a family man and a business man, despite his suffering during the holocaust. I wonder how this might relate to her own sense of self; that despite her deep connection to

her past, she wishes to acknowledge that she is also much more than a granddaughter of survivors.

In Lex's narrative of her family's war-time experience she seems aware of their resourcefulness when she uses language such as "got out" and "managed to" and "made it" that hints at pride in her family's survival. She also seems proud of being Jewish, of the family values, sense of shared history and the strength of identity and connection that she experiences in belonging. In my own narrative, it is the sense of resilience and survivorship that gives me pride when I wrote about my grandmother's story for a school assignment.

It has been suggested that the third generation have been able to disrupt their parents' fear and to transform it into pride (Fogelman, 2008; Fox 2010). From the findings in this study, it is hard to say whether there is such a transformational relationship between fear and pride. Rather it would seem that pride sits alongside negative feelings such as fear, anger, loss and shame.

Feelings of playfulness and joy appear in Lex's narrative when she describes memories of playing conkers under the oak tree in her grandparents' garden, which her father planted as a child. Playfulness and joy also appears in Ilana's narrative when she describes her recent trip to Hungary with her grandfather, she shares a memory of him and his friends singing old Hungarian folk songs in the back of the car as they tour around the country. Stephen describes fleeting moments of joy when he receives a smile from his grandfather. All of these examples of joy and playfulness seem to manifest in moments of connection.

Raphael reflects upon his relationship with his niece and nephew, and his wish for them to enjoy their food and take pleasure in eating, in a way that he was not allowed as a child. I



have wondered how free Raphael has been to feel joy and pleasure, as he appears to struggle under the shadows of his family's trauma.

Developmental researchers and neuroscientists suggest that positive emotion is thought to be part of the bonding system, as attachment is built through joint experiences of play and joy (Trevvarthen, 1993; Schore, 2003). Trauma can impact an individual's capacity for joint experience of positive affect, to a potentially destructive level, as disconnecting feelings such as shame can interfere with the bonding system (Fisher, 2019). It appears that my co-participants are expressing, in varying degrees, their struggles as well as their triumphs to feel joy and connection in their lives, and within their families.

### **Reflecting on the Second Generation**

My co-participants' reflections upon the second generation overlaps with other themes, and therefore is also discussed elsewhere. For example, both Lex and Ilana refer to their parents as protective; Stephen and Raphael refer to more complex relationships with their parents, in particular how they believe that their fathers taught them fear and anger. Raphael goes furthest in tackling this area as he reflects upon his father's lack of a role model and the repercussions of that on his own fathering, as well as his feeling of connection to his father and that side of his family.

Here I wish to discuss, however, the proportional absence of reflection upon the second generation, bearing in mind the substantial literature on the attachment relationship between parents and offspring as the main mechanism for trauma transfer. I have wondered whether the absence of this area in their narratives hints to difficulties in really taking a position in relation to ones' parents. I have wondered whether the topic was too sensitive for discussion in a group format, and would need more creative ways of investigating this area in future research.

## The Responsibility of the Third Generation

A repeated theme within my co-participants' narratives is a sense of obligation and duty that would appear to correlate with past findings of a sense of 'mission' amongst the third generation (Lev-Wiesel, 2007; Rezke, 2013). I have found that the word 'responsibility' is closer to my co-participants' sense of duty in remembering the holocaust, talking about the holocaust, passing on a connection to the fourth generation, and to living with purpose and meaning. Victor Frankl's (2011:29) logotherapy is based upon the premise of "responsibleness as the essence of existence." Frankl (2011) describes existential analysis as the attempt to bring man – the neurotic, in particular – to an awareness of his responsibleness. I have found it of interest that my co-participants seem to have an acute awareness of their own responsibilities in the world – perhaps a direct response to their family holocaust history, and a possible positive outcome for the descendants of survivors.

### Remembering the Holocaust

*"I feel like we have a very strong responsibility to remember, to remember individuals, to remember the enormity of the scale. To remember the history and politics of the situation – as a warning..."* (Stephen)

All of my co-participants seem acutely aware of being the last living generation that will have had personal relationships with survivors, and how the memories of the holocaust could die with them unless their generation preserve the stories and keep them alive. In particular Lex describes her keen awareness of a need to keep stories alive as she passes on a '*touch*' to those she meets throughout her life. The theme of responsibility appears throughout Lex's transcript more than any other co-participant as she seems to experience herself as a custodian of her family's stories. She talks about attending memorial services or engaging in groups like this very research group as a way to fulfil that responsibility. At the end of the third group when asked to select objects, she chooses a pen to represent her role as

something of a 'scribe' with a duty to preserve and chronicle her family history. I wonder if she could be referring not only to the factual history (which she knows less about than other members of the group) but perhaps something of the impact of her history too, which she communicates by engaging in this research.

### We Need to Talk about the Holocaust

Ilana is worried that the holocaust will be forgotten as other genocides have been, and thinks that we need "*to keep the holocaust on the agenda.*" Ilana disagrees with her grandfather's idea that the Jewish people need to get up from mourning; she feels more concerned that the events of the holocaust will slip from peoples' minds. An anxiety about 'being kept in mind' comes up in Steven's narrative too as he explains at the beginning of the first group that he hates it when people forget his name; he then expresses his own shame at not being able to recall details of his family history. This anxiety of being forgotten seems to be present in the group consciousness, expressed within my own anxiety that the members will forget the date of each next group. Family therapists who take an intergenerational view, note that the system cannot tolerate forgetting (Broughton, 2010) and that unresolved emotional expression is held suspended, affecting to an extent, the whole system. Each generation is said to nominate one system member to carry the memory (Broughton, 2010), which both I and Raphael have reflected upon in our roles as 'torch-bearers' within our families. I have also wondered if Lex takes on this role for her family too, albeit in a more implicit way.

It seems that this fear of forgetting - the existential fear of being obliterated from mind - motivates Ilana to take a more preoccupied position in relation to the holocaust. This also speaks to my own holding onto the family name 'Hirt' as avoidance of the guilt that forgetting might inspire.

### The Fourth Generation

Although they do not have children of their own at the time of this research, both Stephen and Raphael mention the fourth generation, as they explore their sense of what they would like to pass on to their nieces and nephews. Keeping something alive seems important to them both; not in the negative way of trauma-transmission, but as a positive inheritance and connection to their history and culture. It seems that both are concerned about the distance between the fourth generation and their family heritage, and feel it is their responsibility to provide a link to the stories of the past. In the literature, writers of the third generation talk of an 'urge to bear witness' to the grandparents' experiences and to pass on what has been inherited, as well as a responsibility towards the future and ensuring the existence of another generation (Berger & Milbauer, 2013). This appears to be corroborated by the narratives in this study. Raphael heard his father repeating a phrase that his own father had repeated to him: "Eat quick the Cossacks are coming." This phrase most likely originated from the time of the Jewish pogroms that took place across Western Europe before the Second World War. To Raphael, this feels like an inheritance; something that he values and would also say to his own children despite its message of fear.

Raphael describes wanting to offer his nieces and nephew something different, however, from what he and his brothers experienced as children. Reflecting upon the fourth generation, I believe that my co-participants are showing awareness of both implicit and explicit rules of their family systems, and are mindfully making decisions about what they would like to pass on (Schutzenberger, 1998:23).

### Living with Purpose

Several of the co-participants describe feeling a sense of purpose that is directly related to their family histories. Ilana explains: "My grandfather wasn't supposed to survive so anyone

that comes from him wasn't meant to be here. And the fact that we are here means we have a purpose."

Frankl (2006) writes that individuals can survive the cruellest of hardships by retaining a sense of meaning. In 'Mans search for ultimate meaning' Frankl (2011) focuses on 'will to meaning' as the most human of all human needs. He quotes Maslow (as cited in Frankl, 2011: 84): "the business of self-actualisation can best be carried out via a commitment to an important job." My co-participants' family holocaust history seems to provide them with meaningful motivation in their lives.

### **Relationship to the Holocaust History**

Each co-participant describes the different nature of their relationship to their family's holocaust history. For Ilana, there is a sense of the holocaust being normative; something that was always felt or known. Ilana states at the beginning of the first focus group: "*I've always been interested in the holocaust*". I think that this statement can be interpreted in various ways: as carrying an intellectual distance – just an 'interest' - or a sense of agency over her involvement in her history, as it is *'her'* interest. On the other hand her statement connotes a sense of being immersed as she has *always* been interested. In my own narrative, I state that I cannot remember finding out about the holocaust, as though I have always known, and have always felt its significance in my life. Whilst being interviewed by Houston (2016: 50) another third generation interviewee says: "The holocaust was normative – it was always there. No first moment experience... It was normal".

### **Feeling Connected to the Holocaust History**

Ilana describes an "*umbilical-cord*" connection with her history, as her "*life is a result of holocaust survival*". The imagery of the unborn baby being fed and kept alive by this

connection to its mother's placenta would seem a positive, nurturing connection. It also suggests that Ilana feels dependent upon her history for some sort of sustenance. And it does open up the question of what it means to be so intimately and dependently connected to a history, when that history is filled with trauma as well as survival. What kind of 'placenta' does the holocaust make for the descendants of survivors?

Raphael tells me that he cannot find the words to describe how deeply he feels with regards to his family history:

*"I wish that I could put you in my heart,  
So that you could feel this feeling..."*

Here I get the sense of something deeper/impossible to contain in language, which he can only hope to show me. Raphael appears to be expressing something of his need for connection; for another person to feel the fullness of his feeling. I have wondered whether Raphael might be speaking of something on the level of the soul.

Followers of the famous German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger include the idea of soul in their work as a particular way of working with groups to illuminate and heal individuals who are impacted by transgenerational family dynamics. Facilitators of family constellations use terms such as the 'systemic soul' or 'family soul' to represent "everything that makes a family a particular family over time" including "all the particular events and traumas that happened to individuals, and the greater socio-political events that affected whole families, tribes and nations" (Broughton, 2010: 62). I think that Raphael refers to this idea of family soul when, in trying to express how deeply he feels the impact, he exclaims: "I'm a Reichmann!"

Both Ilana's 'umbilical-connection' and Raphael's 'feeling in his heart' as well as Stephen's 'unspoken connections' to his Grandfather all speak to a deep connection that, for me, borders upon the transpersonal realm of human experience.

The implications here for therapists working with intergenerational trauma are vast, as the limits of the therapeutic frame are set by their own perceptions alone, it would appear that an openness to be shown experience that goes beyond what their clients are able to express with words, is imperative to a deeper understanding of the experiences of intergenerational trauma.

#### Holocaust History as a Burden

Dina Wardi (1992) describes the 'memorial candle child' as carrying the heavy burden of taking part in the emotional world of the survivor parents. Ilana uses the word "*burden*" to describe her tendency towards 'crippling perfectionism' as a response to the family myth of her Grandfather's miraculous survival. She directly relates her "*anxious tendencies*" to the Holocaust; "*because I am alive, and I wasn't supposed to be.*" This might correlate with other findings of high-achievement amongst the third generation; individuals who are outwardly successful socio-economically and professionally, with an internal sacrifice of anxiety and perfectionism.

Stephen also seems to experience his family history as added burden that he'd rather not take on; "*I've got enough stuff...*" Raphael appears to feel the burden of his connection to his family history when he describes how his brother has such "*ease in society*" which he could never emulate. He seems to relate this difference between himself and his brother to his own pronounced connection to his father's side of the family, whilst his brothers have retained more distance. For example his brother is more able to joke about their father's "*abnormal*"

tendencies whereas Raphael was much more closely aligned with their father, feeling a need to show respect. This is also influenced by being ten years younger than his two brothers, so that he spent more time with his father than his brothers did.

### Pre-occupation With the Holocaust

To a certain extent, all of my co-participants and I could be described as pre-occupied with the holocaust, as this part of our history is at least important enough to be willing to take part in a research project with a considerable time commitment. It is impossible to say whether or not this is representative of the whole generation, as for some the holocaust might not take up much significance in their minds at all.

Lex appears to be the least pre-occupied with her family's holocaust history. Her relationship to the holocaust is more based upon responsibility as a member of the third generation. Ilana, on the other hand, tells us that she *"always thinks about the holocaust"* and that her decision to pick holocaust literature as a topic for her university dissertation means that *"it's going to overtake my thoughts, even more so than it does already."* Ilana tells us how she 'sees the ghetto' when she walks around the area in which she lives, when she sees a particular religious boy walking around with his tall black hat and 'payot' she is transported to another place and another time. It is as though "fragments of memory fall off the arrow of time so that what happened years ago, is felt to be happening now" (Hopenwasser, 2017: 66).

In my own narrative I describe how I initially had a deeply preoccupied relationship with the holocaust, echoed in Lev-Wiesel's description of intense preoccupations amongst the descendants of survivors, as well as the commonly experienced dreams of being chased by Nazi Soldiers (Lev-Wiesel, 2007). A turning point in my own relationship to my family history was when my tutor pointed to me being hidden behind these big family stories. Despite



initially struggling with her observation, I have journeyed backwards and forwards in my own quest to find the 'me' amongst the 'not me', and this was partly what allowed me to re-approach this project with enough distance to carry it out. I would therefore agree with Moskowitz (2016: 57) that: "To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation."

From his multi-generational studies on holocaust survivor families, Bar-On (1995) suggested the phenomena of 'partial relevance' referring to a position that descendants of survivors can be located between an 'over-generalisation' (i.e. the individual believes that everything happening in the present can be attributed to the holocaust) and under-generalization (i.e. the individual believes the holocaust has no connection whatsoever with the present). I think it is the achievement of this partial relevance in my own relationship to the holocaust, which allowed me to return to the topic without it feeling like it could 'overtake my thoughts' as Ilana predicts for herself with her own holocaust related dissertation topic. Julia Chaitin (2014) adds the concept of 'paradoxical relevance' to Bar-On's (1995) notion of partial relevance. Paradoxical relevance describes a situation in which the descendants of survivors "recognize that the holocaust is meaningful and relevant in their lives, but cannot explain how" (Duchin & Wiseman, 2016: 129). My co-participants and I all seem to take varying positions along this spectrum of relevance of the holocaust in our lives, but all of us express some aspect of the 'paradoxical relevance' – a connection that we cannot always explain.

### **Positive Impacts of the Holocaust History Upon the Third Generation**

Lex reflects upon the difference between her narrative and others in the group: *"In comparison to other stories it's not been as negative and if anything has brought us together to have a purpose that we can talk about, an identity and a history."*

Most of the co-participants' narratives contain some positive affect such as pride, and positivity around their sense of connectedness with family and community. In particular Lex feels that her family has gained a strong identity and sense of community that is unparalleled amongst other cultures. Ilana speaks of feeling driven to succeed, whilst Stephen speaks of feeling motivated to speak up and act upon social injustice. I also put my compassion and empathy as a psychotherapist down to the impacts of my family traumas, as well as my resilience and my 'fighting spirit.'

### Creative Motivation and Making Meaning from the Holocaust

The documented outpouring of art, creative writing and film from the third generation along with an over-representation amongst the helping professions and a propensity towards social action would seem evident of such a positive outcome (Rosenaft, 2014). Moskowitz, (2016: 54) suggests that the third generation represent: "A graduation from survivors' crippling shame and 'tikkun atsmi' - self-repair - to pride and 'tikkun olam' - world repair, or social justice". My co-participants experience the positive legacy alongside the negative; both shame and pride; internal struggles and difficult feelings about their engagement with their family histories as well as an ability to make meaning from their histories and to try and impact positively upon the larger world.

At the last focus group, Ilana speaks about her upcoming trip to India which is a social action trip organised by the chief rabbi's office. She mentions her own feelings of conflict about taking meaning from the suffering of the holocaust. Later in the group she reflects further: *"Why wouldn't we, I mean, if there's anything good that can come from suffering, people living with more purpose and meaning in their life or living with more awareness of the needs of others and a commitment to being a better person..."*

Stories that are recounted through the generations “often encompassed morals and values important for the survivors to pass to future generations” (Abraham, 2014: 11). Testament to this process is Danna Pycher (2012), a granddaughter of holocaust survivors. In her book of life lessons is inspired by the anecdotes and stories passed to her from her grandmother’s stories of survival during the holocaust, Pycher (2012: XVI) writes: “My grandparents’ stories and lessons created the essence of who I am.” She includes important values such as kindness, gratitude, perseverance, resistance and the questioning of authority, amongst the lessons she shares as a positive legacy of her grandparents’ memory.

Stephen also recognises a link between his motivations in life and his family history:

*“...my political motivation almost comes from that – I’m very ‘green’ and save the earth kind of person, and try to cycle and not drive to places as far as I can, but I wonder how much that’s come from, um, a subconscious desire just to not waste anything.”*

This resonates with Cohn and Morrison’s (2018) finding that adolescent third generation members use their identity as survivors’ descendants as a framework through which to ethically situate themselves in relation to contemporary political and social issues (e.g. asylum seekers). In a similar vein, my carrying out of this research project has felt like a meaningful process to try and represent the unheard voices of my co-participants, and to contribute towards the third generation story.

### Strength of Identity and Pride

Lex feels that a common history brings people together and unites them. In several places throughout her narrative, Lex reiterates her view of the strength of Jewish identity and community, which she relates to having suffered as a group in the past. Bergman and Jucovy (1982) echo Lex’s point of view that the Jewish people can be seen not only as a

socio-religious group, but also as a group united by a common trauma. Raphael also reflects upon the “*very strong bond*” between Jewish communities around the world.

### Regeneration and Growth

At the end of the third focus group, when asked to choose an object from the table to represent their relationship to their holocaust histories, Ilana chooses a box of matches to represent the idea of giving something that does not diminish: “...with a flame, the more you give, the more there is.” This seems to tie to the theme of regeneration and growth, and it is interesting that fire is used symbolically by Ilana, as it has often appeared in my own reflexive notes. I have considered the archetypes of fire, which are knowledge, light and life, and how unconsciously I chose the ultimate symbol of regeneration in my younger son’s name, Phoenix.

I think that this theme resonates with Rezke’s (2013) findings that young third generation Jews in Poland spoke about being engaged in the ‘mission’ of creating another generation. After the Holocaust, Jewish people and culture were nearly all wiped out, and young people there are busy with re-building communities.

In Lex’s narrative she tells the story of the giant oak tree that her father planted in her Grandparents garden as a boy, despite the house seeming to ‘*stand still in time*’ as it has not been updated in any major way since they bought it in the 1930s. In her story, her father sows a seed in the garden and his own children enjoy playing with the conkers that fall from the tree each year. This appears to be another symbolic story of regeneration and growth, allowing room for playfulness and vitality, amongst the third generation. This is very different to Raphael’s use of the symbol of the severed tree, in his drawing of a broken tree-stump, demonstrating the difference between his and Lex’s experience of how the holocaust has

impacted their families. Lex tells the story of vitality and joy having been recovered; in the garden something new and different is able to emerge whereas Raphael's representation of the tree focuses on the deadness and disconnect, expressed in his drawing by a total severance from his ancestors, and an un-rootedness that is powerfully visualised.

## **Identity as Third Generation:**

### Commonality and Difference

I agree with the need to take caution against any attempt to homogenise the generation – the third generation is indeed diverse (Jilovsky et al, 2016). There is, however, a growing desire amongst the third generation to collectivise their experience, and my co-participants seem to echo this sentiment (Jilovsky et al, 2016). Most of my co-participants expressed that they had come to the focus groups with the expectation of finding similarity amongst themselves, perhaps suggesting their desire to find 'one voice' to represent their experiences.

According to Judith Herman, this search for commonality makes sense as a response to family trauma. The discovery that one is not alone is suggested to be essential to healing. Irvin Yalom (1995) suggests that the therapeutic impact of universality is especially profound for people who have felt isolated and alienated by traumatic experience. It is healing to feel normal and understood. It is noteworthy that Raphael journeyed a long way to attend the group from South London, where he feels disconnected from the Jewish community. He told me that he had hoped to find validation through others who might have experienced something similar to himself.

What they seem to have discovered instead, is that their experiences vary widely despite their feeling connected at the same time. Being a grandchild of holocaust survivors appears

to mean something different to each of them, echoing other recent narrative research that has taken into account individual difference (Jilovsky et al, 2016). One of the common factors that would appear to tie my co-participants together, is the fact that their holocaust history takes up an important place in their self-identities.

Separation and individuation has been discussed in the literature as a key issue for descendants of holocaust survivors (Scharf, 2007; Scharf and Maylesses, 2011). Lex's hesitancy to speak about negative experience, and Ilana's own difficulties to find internal space separate from her family's stories of trauma, as well as my own historical challenges to find enough distance from my own family history to be able to carry out this research, all suggest that separation and individuation continue to be key issues for the third generation. It has been put forward by Susan Berger (2014) that tolerating aggression is essential in a family in order to manage the tasks of individuation and separation faced by the next generation. This fits, therefore, with earlier discussion of avoidance and the resulting disavowal of anger as an adaptive strategy that might impinge upon the ease with which grandchildren of survivors can separate from their families, and from the family trauma.

### Perceptions of Current Antisemitism

Another area of wide individual difference between co-participants is how they perceive antisemitism in the current world. Raphael tells me of his experiences of direct anti-Semitism when we first meet, and he continues during each focus group to reflect upon subtle forms of antisemitism that he has experienced throughout his life, including the violent attack that he experienced as a child when skiing, which he also attributes to anti-Semitism. Lex reports that anti-Semitism is something that she hears about on the news, but has never experienced. Stephen says he has never experienced direct prejudice himself, but feels mobilised by a deep responsibility to stand up against anti-Semitic views if he hears them expressed. Ilana imagines that her peers at university have thoughts persecutory thoughts,

of her being a “typical Jewish girl” who wants to talk about the holocaust. Ilana is particularly attuned to the resistance in society to know and to talk about the holocaust, which might contribute to her perceptions of criticism from her peers, for wanting to talk about it. I find this difference in perception of anti-Semitism between my co-participants interesting, and a possible avenue for future research. It is possible that perceptions of prejudice might also be related to the defensive strategies as discussed at the beginning of this discussion; those who perceive more anti-Semitism may have been taught by their families to be alert and attuned to such threats.

### Connection/Disconnection with the Jewish Community

Previous research from social psychology has found that strong self-identification with a cultural group can mitigate the deleterious effects of belonging to a group that is devalued by society (Leach et al, 2010). My co-participants show differing amounts of belonging and connection with the Jewish community. Raphael feels disconnected from the Jewish community, which traces back to splits in his own self-identity – he cannot reconcile his ‘Englishness’ with his ‘Jewishness’. I felt particularly moved by Stephen’s comments on his distance from the Jewish community: “I never felt like I belonged to any one group. It’s a shame... I don’t expect to have any one healthy social group I can rely on.” Conversely, both Ilana and Lex feel themselves to be embedded in the Jewish community, particularly Ilana who belongs to the Orthodox community in which members live close to one another, and there is a strong sense of group-identification. Lex appears to inhabit a position of belonging and pride in the Jewish group, whilst also maintaining some distance as she has separated enough to decide how she would like to approach her religiousness, as she explains that she has decided which traditions she chooses to continue in her own home, now that she is married. Experts on developmental trauma and attachment concur that connectedness with community is healing as well as protective (Siegal, 2019). I do wonder whether Ilana and Lex have been protected by their ties to community, as their sense of belonging and connection

is a source of pride within their self-identities. Carolyn Spring (2019: 73) writes: "Shame is the sense that we don't belong." Raphael and Stephen both seem to struggle with feelings of disconnection and aloneness, as well as feelings of shame, and I believe that this has important implications for how we understand the needs of families of trauma survivors; enabling strong community ties may be protective and healing. According to Judith Herman (1997: 214), "The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms..." Both Stephen and Raphael feel isolated from community, and perhaps this is not merely a parallel process to their more pronounced experience of loss, anger, fear and shame.



## **(8) REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

The current study has allowed a more complex picture to emerge by using narrative to give the third generation a voice, rather than ‘testing’ for trauma. Aligning with the outcomes of the few other existing narrative research studies into the third generation, the findings of this study point to subtle inner representations that result from a holocaust family background, as expressed within an individual’s subjective storied self, rather than within overt post-traumatic symptoms (Scharf and Mayseless, 2011; Moskowitz, 2016). I would agree that “the experience of internalising, post-Holocaust identifications is not typically one of clinical debilitation, but of meaningful internal tensions and negotiation” (Moskowitz, 2016: 55).

Diverging from other recent narrative studies (Gradwohl Pisano, 2013) I would now suggest that ‘working through’ intergenerational trauma might be a redundant and even hackneyed term. I would argue against any set of universal stages of progression that delineate a path from more to less ‘traumatised’ or from less to more integrated and/or healed, as I do not believe these constructs usefully express the experiences of the individuals who contributed to this study. My co-participants are rather caught between their sense of responsibility to keep a flame alive by remembering, to combat death by forgetting, and to pass history to a fourth generation, along with their drive towards growth and regeneration, my co-participants also attempt to ‘rise from mourning’ and focus on living.

Since carrying out this research I would now argue that it is not trauma that is passed between generations, rather it is the adaptive strategies evoked through the family’s survival of an extremely traumatic environment, that are taught by one generation to the next, as a way to prepare future generations for potential threat. Seeing these inheritances as normal, healthy human adaptations to extreme trauma rather than a sign of resilience or traumatic

illness, puts the trauma back where it belongs, in the past, and recognises survivors and their descendants in a more helpful and normative way.

## **Implications for the Fields of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy**

### Contribution to the Research Field:

As discussed in the literature review, there is a profound need within the field of psychology and psychotherapy to evolve current thinking around the effects of trauma that are inherited. Just this year, research that found a reduction in grey matter of the brains of holocaust survivors with preliminary similar findings amongst their offspring, was described in a mainstream British newspaper under the following headline: *“Scarred DNA: Holocaust survivors’ kids and grandkids have inherited concentration camp ‘brain damage’ that will affect their learning for generations, study finds”* (Rogers, 2019). Such a pathologising and medicalised view of the descendants of holocaust survivors as ‘brain damaged’ does not capture the lived experience of the individuals in question. Therapy professionals and other clinicians who are working with this group need to look to further research to understand how their practice can usefully incorporate knowledge such as that found by Professor Rektor and his team (2019). The current study contributes to a wider story of third generation experience.

In a research field that has previously been dominated by positivistic studies that look for pathology versus resilience amongst the third generation, the findings of this research contribute to an expansion of the research field to include knowledge that is nuanced.

In particular, I believe that the current study’s findings make an important contribution to previous and ongoing research in the area of epigenetics and ‘environmental resilience’ as well as the discourse around historical complex trauma and personality.

In the introduction to this study I discussed developments in neuroscience that illustrate how offspring born to parents who have survived trauma will be born with altered HPA stress axis regulation (Rodgers et al, 2013) and a primed stress response in order to deal with similar threats in their own environments (Yehuda et al, 2005, 2015). My research makes a meaningful contribution here, by suggesting that some of the narratives of my co-participants can be understood as descriptions of their own adaptations to threat, inherited and/or learnt from their predecessors. My participants' stories about affect, in particular emotions such as fear and anger, are examples of how my co-participants' inherited coping mechanisms are seemingly sewn into their everyday lives. These findings shine a light on what it might *mean* to the lived experience of individuals, to have a biologically 'primed stress response' due to intergenerational trauma, and how this impact is sustained two generations after the traumatic event.

My research findings contribute to a discourse that is growing within the field of counselling psychology around the de-pathologising of survivors of historical and complex trauma. Just as works by Judith Herman (1997) paved the way for mental professionals to take a more compassionate view of 'personality disorder' as a result of having survived relational trauma (McLean & Gallop, 2003), the current research findings go a step further to suggest that, for many, these coping strategies are inherited or taught to them by their parents and/or their grandparents as a response to intergenerational trauma. A major contribution of this study to both the research field as well as to the practice of counselling psychologists is the finding that my co-participants relational styles and presentations can be empathically understood as evolutionary adaptations to historical trauma.

#### Implications for the Clinical Practice of Counselling Psychologists:

The findings of the current study suggests that the strong emotions felt by third generation survivors could be linked to survival adaptations that are inherited from their families. Rather than the trauma itself, it is these strategies that are 'taught'. Therapists can play a crucial

role in making these strategies more conscious, with psychoeducation about the role of 'fear,' 'anger' and 'shame' as a protective response to threat. By understanding the subtlety with which descendants can experience the effects of their inheritance, therapists can offer an experience which is validating and normalising.

Through acknowledging their patients' coping strategies as intergenerational, and honouring those coping strategies as healthy responses to historical trauma, therapists can make survival strategies more conscious, freeing clients from restrictive patterns of adaptation. Through developing narrative, and adding words to their experiences, it is possible to add choice in terms of what our patients really *want* to pass to the next generation, and how. By giving the third generation a voice, you give them choice, and this can deeply impact the next generation. When trauma response become more conscious, these reflections of the third generation are there to be picked up and utilised by the fourth generation, contributing towards a continuing intergenerational narrative that builds, over time, and over generations.

This is where my research findings intersect with my own clinical work as a perinatal psychologist. Working with individuals who are transitioning into parenthood, individuals often find themselves remembering and reflecting on their own early experiences of relationship. I find that new parents are often able to use therapy successfully to reflect upon how their own experiences of being parented was impacted by the traumas experienced by their parents or grandparents, thus freeing them up to notice what they want to do differently with their own children. For example, I have recently worked with the daughter of two refugees from Kosovo, who came to me as she was struggling to manage her anxiety around going back to work following the difficult birth of her first daughter. During our sessions, she seemed to be greatly impacted by developing an understanding of how her parents' coping strategies could sometimes get in the way of her ability to acknowledge her own vulnerabilities, which became a real issue following the traumatic birth of her daughter. Acknowledging some of her coping strategies as learnt responses to her parents' trauma allowed her to take a more compassionate position towards herself, as well as helping her

become more available to her baby daughter too as she became less pre-occupied with 'staying strong' – an introject she had learnt from her parents - and allowed herself to be supported by others in the way that all new parents need.

The current findings would suggest that it is essential that therapists do not pathologise what their clients do or do not know about their family histories; the previously assumed relationship between conscious knowing and greater resolution of trauma is complex, and most likely un-founded. Clients could benefit more from exploration of not what they know, but what form their knowing takes. Whether this knowing is mainly non-verbal with very few remembered facts; whether there is guilt and shame around their avoidance or ambivalence of knowing, or whether knowing took place before they were able to integrate such knowledge. Therapists must stay curious to how their clients were involved in the telling of family stories, and their coping mechanisms around not knowing. Psychoeducation could take a central role in this type of work, as therapists can help their clients to re-frame avoidance and silence as normal reactions to trauma. This might particularly benefit those with shame as a core response to their own decisions to 'not know'.

The findings of this study demonstrate how important it is to explore the quality of a client's emotional connection to the past; as a burden, as something to take meaning from in their own lives, as a set of beliefs or 'family myths' that guide their own aims and objectives in life. Lastly, I believe that the findings of this research suggests that we hold descendants of the holocaust as active agents of their own emotional and psychological involvements with their pasts, as well as allowing them to explore how they must live with the consequences of their choices of engagement. Different emotional distances in their relating with their histories come with a different set of experiences.

This type of support in therapy might allow for individuals amongst the third generation to find freedom from constrictive patterns of adaptation that may keep them isolated from community. Experiencing 'belonging' appears to be important for these individuals, even if it can at first only be found within the therapy relationship itself (Spring, 2019). Clients can be actively encouraged to engage with community, and to learn to trust their social groups.

The tendency for aggression to be expressed passively in the findings of the current study (or not expressed at all) is an indication for therapists to support their third generation clients to explore potential obstacles in taking a critical position, especially within their families. Issues around separation might be worked with explicitly, whilst holding a non-pathologising view of the conflicting needs to belong and to 'blend in' as another adaptive response. For individuals who struggle to separate from their holocaust history, therapy can provide a space to better know themselves as separate from the experiences of their families, whilst still acknowledging – and not dismissing - their 'umbilical-like' connection. Both responses are needed; without the acknowledgement of their connections to their family pasts, clients might feel silenced and shamed.

Connection with community, pride, responsibility and the finding of meaning and purpose all seem to be positive ways in which the co-participants experience the effects of their holocaust history. Therapy can enable third generation clients to ponder the meaning that they might find in their own family histories, and to reflect upon their sense of responsibility and purpose in their own lives as well as within the wider community.

Lastly the third generation has begun to form relationships with the fourth generation. Therapy could provide an essential space for reflection upon what parts of their 'inheritance'

they want to preserve, and which they which to discard; for example family rules around food, or links to Jewish culture. Clients can be encouraged to consider which coping mechanisms can now be laid to rest, and what they hope to pass on as traditions that strengthen identity and a sense of belonging. This is the work of prevention, as conscious reflection can interrupt implicit communication between generations, allowing instead for a connection to the past to be communicated in a thoughtful and conscientious way.

### **Limitations of the Study**

I have considered that the heterogeneity within the focus group could have been a limitation to the study. With differing ages, marital status, and genders, it is possible that there was not quite enough commonality for participants to feel safe to further explore more sensitive topics such as their relationships within their own parents and siblings.

The focus group methodology employed means that we must question whether the findings are more indicative of the group's narrative rather than the individual's. It is possible that I have miss-represented some of the co-participants by presenting their narratives as separate from the context in which they were created. I have attempted to work around this problem by eliciting co-participant feedback upon their narratives, which created a checking process for my narrative representations. I also provide an in-depth exploration of the group dynamics which provides context and acknowledgement that these stories were co-created in a particular time and place. I had to balance this with the seemingly greater limitation of producing one longer narrative that the reader may have struggled to follow, in which the separate voices of my co-participants would have been further lost.

As I was offering some of my own third generation experience during the focus groups, other co-participants may have felt less able to voice differing experiences. I have considered after

carrying out the groups that an outsider facilitator also would have allowed me to take part more fully as a participant, without the distractions of managing the process, and perhaps if I had been able to contribute more as a fellow co-participant alone, this would have lessened the influence upon what others felt able/unable to say.

The amount of data produced by this project was vast, with a real potential for collecting more as the co-participants seemed keen to meet again both as a group and individually. Having as many as four co-participants limited how much data I could collect from each, and so I may not have done them justice in allowing them the space and time needed to express themselves more fully.

### **Recommendations for Future Research:**

A single case study carried out over a longer period of time may elucidate how the third generation narrative evolves and changes over time, and would allow for more sensitive topics to be discussed, for example, the relationship between the third generation and their parents. The current study offers a snap-shot of the narrative building process; it would be of interest to explore how themes might develop over the life trajectory, for example when having children of ones' own. I would recommend further study that focuses on the transition to parenthood for the third generation, especially as it is within the parent-child relationship that adaptations to past trauma are said to be transmitted (Salberg & Grand, 2017).

Whilst the focus group methodology allowed for rich data which might otherwise not have emerged in individual interviews, it is possible that more sensitive topics were not discussed due to participants feeling potentially exposed or ashamed in the group. Future research with multiple individual interviews might allow for rich in-depth material that covers more sensitive topics such as family relationships. A reflexive stance by the researcher in which they



attempt to elucidate the relational and implicit aspects of the interviews would be extremely valuable as it is within such obscured areas that the impacts of trauma appear to reside.

Having established the importance of therapy in supporting clients with trauma in their family backgrounds, it follows that an exploration of the therapist's emotional and subjective responses to working with IGT from the holocaust would be of significant use. Such a study could explore the phenomenology of working therapeutically with historical trauma, and to assess the potential impact upon the therapist so that we can understand what supports may need to be in place for the therapist, from supervision and training.

### **Final Reflections**

Carrying out this research has impacted deeply upon my sense of self. When I started working on this study, I was embedded in a trauma theory framework, and expected to find a negative trail of trauma in the third generation and in my own story. Instead I was surprised to find positive narratives of strength, purpose and meaning that featured in recent literature as well as in the lives of my co-participants. Along the way, I have found these narrative threads winding within my own story too as I feel a firm sense of pride in this research, which my history has led me to writing.

I have felt impacted personally by my co-participants at many different points in the research process. For example, at times I perceived in Ilana, a younger version of myself, who used to be heavily preoccupied by my family's traumas. A result of this personal response was that, as I wrote my discussion of themes, I sometimes overlooked her distinct voice and story, which I went back over to attend to, a process that was supported by others reading my research and pointing out where I might have missed her narrative.

Another challenging aspect of this research was in immersing myself in narrative inquiry, a new paradigm for me, after my first degree which was very much based in a positivistic framework. This change required a constant process of noticing where I fall back to old, familiar ways of structuring and evaluating research that were not coherent with a post-modernist philosophy. In some ways, conducting a thematic analysis is an example that could be seen as an inconsistency with the philosophy behind narrative inquiry that usually calls for discussion of metaphors, language and meaning. In orchestrating this study, however, I have at times come up against the well documented 'lack of narratability' (Kranz, 2016) and I found a structured analysis of themes to be grounding and necessary in my attempts at expressing something meaningful, whilst acknowledging that there might have been other ways to present this knowledge.

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## (9) APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Recruitment Advertisement

# **Constructing Third Generation Narratives of the Holocaust**

Invitation to participate in a doctoral research Study

**Do you have at least one grandparent who survived the Jewish European holocaust?**

Would you be interested in joining a **small, three-part focus-group** that will contribute towards a piece of doctoral research investigating the experiences of grandchildren of holocaust survivors or refugees?

#### **Dates for Focus Group:**

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016, 7.30pm - 9pm

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 7.30pm – 9pm

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 7.30pm – 9pm

#### **Venue for Focus Group:**

4 Hallswelle Road, Temple Fortune, NW11 0DJ

The three 90 minute meetings will offer a space to share and reflect upon your third generation stories. The group will be limited to four members who are 18-40 years old, who are interested in making sense of their experiences as a grandchild of survivor/refugees.

If you would like to find out more about this research, please contact **Emily Ollman-Hirt**, Doctoral Candidate in Counselling Psychology at the Metanoia Institute, London.

Tel: **07769698669**

Email: **[emily@iasispsychotherapy.co.uk](mailto:emily@iasispsychotherapy.co.uk)**

## Appendix 2: Participant Sheet and Consent Form

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Constructing Third Generation Narratives of the Holocaust: An Autoethnographic Inquiry.**

This research is part of my professional doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy, a joint doctoral programme with Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University.

This study has been reviewed by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee

You have received this information sheet because you have expressed interest in taking part in my research as a co-participant.

This sheet offers information about:

1. The aims of my research;
2. What it might mean for you to be a participant in my research;
3. Your choices in how you might wish to participate in the research process;
4. Your right to refuse to be documented.

### **Aims of the research:**

In this study, I aim to explore the experience of being the grandchild of holocaust survivors. As a third generation survivor myself, my own experiences will be included as part of the research data, alongside the stories of my 'co-participants'.

### **What will happen if you agree to be a co-participant?**

If you agree to be involved in my research, I will first ask for a convenient time in which I may contact you by telephone. You will need to leave approximately 10-15 minutes for this phone call, as it will be an opportunity to discuss fully what the study entails, before you make a final decision.

If we agree to move forward at this point, I will invite you to participate in a three-part focus group with two other co-participants, and myself. The 90-minute focus groups will take place in a venue in Temple Fortune, North London, three times on the following dates:

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm - 9pm

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm – 9pm

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm – 9pm

It would be important for the research that you are able to commit to all three 90-minute focus groups. This focus group will not be a therapy group, but rather a space to share and reflect upon our experiences of being the grandchild of holocaust survivors, and how our experiences might be similar or different from one another.

### **What will happen next?**

Firstly, you may not wish to read anything that I have written, in which case I will not send you any drafts or the final written study.

If you wish to participate in the reviewing process of my research, I will send you excerpts from my descriptions of the focus groups in which you are mentioned, for you to review. You will then have an opportunity to send back comments and/or to meet with me in person to talk over the excerpts. I may make some revisions or include your comments in my final write up.

I cannot promise that I will revise or omit anything after the point of submitting my research, but I do see your contributions as an important part of my research and promise to write with respect and dignity for those choosing to take part in my project.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

During the focus group you may find that others' stories share some elements of your own, which can be a helpful experience. You may also find it useful to have a space to reflect in depth upon your family history and your own life. Whilst neither the focus group nor the interview aims to be therapeutic, it may be a space to develop insight both personally and about UK Jewish culture in the third generation after the holocaust.

### **What are the Risks?**

During this study, we will be discussing the effects of the holocaust, and our experiences of family and culture, which has the potential to be distressing, in ways that you may not have anticipated. You may find that either the focus group or the interview provokes difficult feelings and thoughts.



Some people find that reading about themselves can feel exposing, so it is important that you let me know if you are really uncomfortable with something that I have written. If however you do feel distressed afterwards for whatever reason, you may wish to consider further support. Contacts for private psychotherapists will be made available upon request. There is also a monthly therapy group in North London specifically for descendants of the holocaust, the details of which are on the bottom of this information sheet.

### **Can I provide anonymity and confidentiality?**

In the final research report which will be published as a doctoral thesis, every effort will be made to conceal information that might be linked back to you. I can offer to change your name and other basic details. I will not be able to guarantee your material will not be identifiable by a reader that may know you or your family personally. This research will be available in academic publications only, however, and will not be widely accessible to the public.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

This research will be published as a postgraduate dissertation in the Middlesex University Research Repository within the next two years. You will be able to obtain a copy of the final dissertation through my access to the repository. In the event of the publication of any research articles or books arising from the study, I will ensure that you are not identified. However the cautions described above will still stand.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The Research Ethics Committee, which reviewed the study is the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee.

Please note that in order to ensure quality assurance and equity this project may be selected for audit by a designated member of the committee. This means that the designated member can request to see signed consent forms. However, if this is the

case your signed consent form will only be accessed by the designated auditor or member of the audit team.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details:

Emily Ollman-Hirt, UKCP, MBPsS,

Integrative Psychotherapist and Counselling Psychologist in training

Email: [emily@iasispsychotherapy.co.uk](mailto:emily@iasispsychotherapy.co.uk)

Phone: 07769698669

If you have any complaints or confidential concerns regarding this study please contact:

Dr Lucia Swanepoel, Metanoia Institute, 13 North Common Road, Ealing, W5 2QB.

Tel: 02085792505

Useful Organisations that can provide further support:

- Shalvata, Holocaust Survivors' Centre: Email: [helpline@jcare.org](mailto:helpline@jcare.org) or call on 020 8922 2222.
- 'Attending to the Silence' – A post-holocaust trauma group. If you are interested please contact Dr. Elya Steinberg on 07956899516 or [elya.steinberg@virgin.net](mailto:elya.steinberg@virgin.net) or Gerhard Payrhuber on 07984 085355 or [psychotherapy@gerhardpayrhuber.com](mailto:psychotherapy@gerhardpayrhuber.com) for more information.

## Constructing Third Generation Narratives of the Holocaust:

### An Autoethnographic Inquiry.

## Consent Form

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw until the project is submitted.

☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded

☐

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

☐


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Name of Participant

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Date

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Signature

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Name of Researcher

---

Date

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Signature

**Appendix 3: Table of Participant Details:**

<b>Participant Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age Bracket</b>	<b>Marital status (at start of focus groups)</b>	<b>Number of survivor Grandparents</b>	<b>Survivor-Grandparent Relationship</b>
Raphael	Male	36-40	Divorced	One	Paternal Grandfather
Ilana	Female	18-25	Unmarried	Four	Maternal and paternal grandparents
Lex	Female	26-30	Married	Two	Paternal Grandparents
Stephen	Male	31-35	Unmarried	Two	Maternal Grandparents

## Appendix 4: Focus Group Question Guide

### Intro:

- Thank you for coming
- Introduction to research – I will be sharing my own experiences too.
- About the third generation more than the survivors themselves. Qs about my research welcome at the end of the group.
- I will be recording which will help me to write my research
- I would like this to be a conversation, informal, discussion
- One person talking at a time, and no disparaging comments on each others' opinions
- Warning that emotive things may come up – take care of themselves. Possible supports for afterwards. Only say as much as they really want to. Can choose to 'pass'
- Not about agreement – different sorts of experiences and opinions are welcome.
- I'd like to hear from everyone, so if someone not talking, I may call on them.
- Remind of confidentiality and their role in this
- Remind them that they can let me know if they feel concerned/upset/overwhelmed about anything during or after the group

### Group One

1. Please could you each tell us your name, and if you could also tell us some background to your name, such as how your parents chose it, and lastly how you feel about your name; do you like it?

- Does anybody want to add anything that they missed out the first time around?

2. Please all take some paper and pens from the table, and sketch a diagram or a picture that shows the relationship between yourself and the relatives that survived the Holocaust. Show relationships with other significant family members too.

3. Please can you talk a little about your diagram/picture?

4. In what ways has your Holocaust history been present for you, growing up?

- At what age did the Holocaust start to feel important/of interest to you? How did it feel important?

- In what ways is your Holocaust history present in your adult life?

5. What might have influenced you to join this focus group? Do you have any hopes/expectations or fears?

## **Group Two**

- **Repeat intro from group 1**

1. Please think of a place/object/photograph/memory from your past that connects you to your relative that survived the Holocaust. It may be a place they liked or lived in, something that they gave you, or a photograph that you have of them. Once you have that object or memory in your mind, could you please each describe it to the group? You may like to use one of the objects that I have on this table to hold in your hands as you talk.

2. What do you think it means to have a grandparent that has survived the Holocaust?

- in what ways has it made you who you are, or hasn't it?

3. In what ways do you think that the decisions you have made in your life were/are influenced in any way by being the grandchild of Holocaust survivors?

4. - Last meeting we talked about 'engaging' with the holocaust, and with our family histories. A – v engaged, frustration with others who are not as much, M- disengaged and shame; T – readiness to engage now; B –disappointments with engagement in discovering family history, and the lack of facts...

- e.g. What sorts of activities have you engaged in during your lifetimes that are somehow linked to your holocaust history? Examples such as my creative writing at school, my thesis etc...

- What were your hopes/expectations in engaging in these activities? What did you want to happen? What happened? Were there any the disappointments?

**Group Three****Repeat intro from group one**

1. Please all take some paper and pens from the table, and sketch a diagram or a picture that shows the relationship between yourself and the relatives that survived the Holocaust. Show relationships with other significant family members too. Please do not write down any names, for confidentiality purposes. Use stick men/figures/symbols and to show the type or strength of the relationships you could use the space on the paper, or drawing lines or circles around people etc..
2. Please can you either select an object from the table in the middle to represent your relationship with the holocaust history. Why did you pick this object?
3. What do you think we have missed here? What would be most important for me to include in my research about the experience and story of the third generation?
4. What has it been like to take part in this group? What has it been like to listen to each other's accounts and ideas?

## Appendix 5: Group Narratives and Unspoken Process

### Focus Group One

I opened the studio door to see Raphael striding down the wooden-slat path, at the end of which the studio building stretched as wide as the garden in which it stood. The studio was a big, open space, one and a half stories tall with a sloping ceiling and several sky-light windows. Opposite a small kitchen there were bookshelves stretching across one whole side of the studio; a ladder leading up to a mezzanine level which was packed full with various equipment, chairs, yoga balls and exercise mats, with green creeper plants hanging down. The musty smell of the studio added to a warm and 'earthy' feel that I hoped would lend a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

Raphael accepted my offer of a cup of tea, and I switched on the kettle. Raphael's manner was friendly and forthright as he asks me about the small figures of Egyptian deities lined up along the edge of the mezzanine above our heads. I told him that I had not really noticed them before, but that they belonged to the owner of the studio.

Raphael: *"Well, I'm not actually allowed back in Egypt. I had a very strange incident there when I was twenty three, twenty four..."*

Raphael eagerly launched into the first of three stories that recounted his experiences of modern day antisemitism. I was surprised at how quickly themes of otherness had entered the room. It seemed as though he wanted to connect with me as another Jewish person, through his stories of discrimination, but as I listened to him, I felt disconnected from his stories as I had never experienced such blatant discrimination. I remembered the disconnected response that I had to his formal and stilted language in his initial emails, and I felt relieved by the much freer, relaxed manner in which he was chatting away in person, although there were few pauses for me to contribute much to the conversation.



Raphael was still speaking when the doorbell buzzed again. Ilana arrived next and then Stephen arrived a few moments later. Still breathless and hot from his cycle ride, Stephen asked me where he could lean his bicycle and change out of his cycling gear. Ilana, rather more demure in her presentation, introduced herself, and within the first few minutes, as she made conversation with Raphael who was already sat down, she referred to her religious observance, something that she later reflected, differentiated her from the rest of the group and made her feel 'other'.

Raphael, Ilana and Stephen then introduced themselves and chatted to one another whilst I greeted Lex and welcomed her in.

Stephen: *"This is nice"*

Ilana: *"This is so nice"*

Raphael: *"It is, isn't it... cosy"*

The two women chose adjacent chairs, and they connected over their similar metallic silver shoes. The two men chose to share the bench seat, rather than taking individual chairs, despite the fact that I had left enough out for everyone to sit separately. The group had split itself by gender, with an empty chair creating a divide in the middle. After nobody moved into the empty chair, I removed it from the circle.

After everybody had introduced themselves, I asked each co-participant to draw a representation of their family, including any relatives that survived the holocaust.

As my co-participants took turns to describe their diagrams, using them as a gateway into their grandparents' stories, I noticed the differences between the ways that they presented their family histories.

I was struck by Ilana's description of her maternal grandmother as "not a real survivor" and I wondered how this might impact upon Lex, who had emailed me prior to the group to ask me

if her Grandparents 'counted' as survivors as they had travelled to England as refugees. What 'counts' as a survivor became a topic of conversation in the room:

Ilana: *"...But the truth is, she was out of Europe at the time of the war, so I don't know what you would class as a survivor."*

Me: *"That's an interesting question. I don't know if anyone else has any thoughts about that. In some ways, was she a refugee?"*

Ilana: *"I don't know, huh."*

Raphael: *"Well, I personally, can I introject? I would say she is a survivor. Because she existed at a time when that persecution was going on. And just because she never went to a camp, or a ghetto, or whatever social class she belonged to at the time, I think if you've been through that and your family has been affected, then... I mean, because my own Grandfather, he never went to any concentration camps but he still experienced as a child, persecution from the Nazi regime so, I would say yes, she's a survivor."*

Raphael stood up for his Grandfather's experiences to be legitimised. Later, I reflected on the repeated de-legitimisation that was a part of his family narrative, as his family were forced to give up their family name, and have their citizenship revoked. Here he stood up for himself and for his Grandfather. I notice that Lex stayed quiet in this direct interaction, and I wondered what she might be thinking. I decided to give her some time to choose when to bring herself in, especially this early in the group, and Stephen went next to introduce his diagram. He spoke directly to Ilana:

Stephen: *"-Well yours is much neater than mine. Yours is all pretty, mine's just pheuhhh"* (He raised his arms upwards and outwards, as he made a noise that sounds like an explosion).

Stephen presented as somewhat confused about the details of his family narrative, such as names and dates and there was a sense of incoherence in his narrative that made it challenging to write up in his narrative representation. When Raphael spoke about his family he referred to many names, dates and places. I found his lengthy account somewhat hard to follow, however, and it was only when I was listening to the tape at home, that I was impacted by the tragic sadness of Raphael's story of loss and abandonment. In my journal notes that I made later on, I reflect on how, in the room, I had felt unaffected by his story, eager to move on as he was speaking, and I wondered what it was within Raphael's communication that felt difficult to stay with.

Later, when I met Lex individually to hear her feedback on her narrative representation, she told me that the detailed family histories given by both Ilana and Raphael contributed to her feeling more sharply aware that she knew less than them about her own family history. Although she did not say so directly, I wondered whether this comparison had contributed to her quietness. I also wondered whether her quietness was a response to Ilana and Raphael having somewhat dominated the narrative in the first half of the first focus group. Later when I was writing up the representations, I noted how Lex commented on how she *"treads carefully"* with expressing her opinions at school or at work, and I wondered how she might also have trodden carefully in the group where could have felt that she had a different story to tell.

As the group started to explore their own relationships with their holocaust histories, Ilana expressed her frustration at others who know less about the concentration camps:

Ilana: *"...And I was thinking: 'You're an idiot, like you're really ignorant you don't know that, you're twenty-something, you should know that.'*

I became aware of some anger beginning to stir inside me as Ilana's words felt judgmental. I became aware of feelings of shame, as I did not know much detail of the concentration

camps myself. Not wishing to give a defensive response, it also felt important to attend to the space, which now felt under threat of becoming quite persecutory.

Me: *"What do other people think?"*

Stephen: *"...I don't know that much. Erm, and you could say that's partly down to a lack of interest, but I would say that its, especially in my first twenty years, it's been mostly defense mechanism, cos that stuff is really scary, really scary."*

As the group continued, the discussion started to flow, with everybody contributing more equally. As people started sharing personal anecdotes from their families it was as though we were beginning to discover the commonalities in the room. People shared their experiences of food being a central theme within their families, and later in my diary I reflected on my own experience of *"a warmth in the room"* as connections were made, and we come towards the end of the first group meeting.

Ilana: *"And my grandfather says that we are still in mourning, we haven't risen yet."*

Stephen: *"Well seventy years has just passed. So..."*

Ilana: *"Yeah"*

In the Jewish tradition, a recently bereaved person will 'sit shiva' for seven days starting from the day of the funeral, on a low, uncomfortable chair. At the end of the seven days, the mourner gets up or 'rises' from the mourning period and resumes their daily activities. The discomfort of the low chairs are to signify their lack of concern for personal comfort during their time of mourning. During the seven days of shiva it is customary for family and friends to gather to tell personal stories about the deceased. As my co-participants stood up to leave, I wondered, with seventy years now passed since the Holocaust, were we too trying to find our own way to 'get up?'

After the group, I was interested in researching more about the Jewish rituals around bereavement. I learnt that traditional attitudes of Judaism did not encourage excessive grave visitation, and that moving on with living is also a big part of the Jewish tradition. I felt buoyed by this new insight, as though it was somehow permission-giving.

### Focus Group Two

It was a few minutes before we were due to start the second focus group but everybody had arrived early, and we were sat down in the same positions as last time, ready to begin.

Ilana: *"I just hope we're helpful for you, for your work"*

Me: *"Ah thank you. You are, absolutely. There are lots of things coming up... You must be feeling that pressure then as well?"*

Ilana: *"I don't really understand it"*

Me: *"Ok, maybe we can think more about...maybe today the questions we are thinking about will be clearer..."*

I decided not to respond directly with another explanation straight away, not wanting my own agenda to take too much of a leading role in the discussion. Ilana clearly felt that she wanted to be 'helpful' and I wonder whether the uncertainty and openness of the group felt anxiety raising for her. I decided to return to this at the end of the group, leaving enough time for a check-out, and to attend to any left-over questions.

In the second group I started to see differences emerging between the narratives of my co-participants. I noticed that the men were more outspoken and direct with regards to their feelings of anger. The women seemed more in touch with the positive impacts of their histories. When I looked through the transcript, I wondered why I questioned both her and Ilana, after they both spoke about their sense of having inherited a positive sense of purpose from their histories: *"But are there any other sides to that?"* – At the time I imagined that they

were simply avoiding the difficulties, and when I read over the transcript it looked like I was 'digging' for something more than the narratives that they were presenting.

*Me: "There are really different experiences in this room. You're talking about being strengthened and connected and err... what you feel you have to offer and to give in terms of keeping something alive, and that hasn't been a negative impact on your life..."*

*Lex: "Yeah, in comparison to other stories (in the group) it's not been as negative and if anything, (the holocaust history?) has brought us together to have a purpose that we can talk about, an identity and a history..."*

Later in my research journal, I wrote: *"Why do I position myself away from the 'strength' that Lex and Ilana feel that they have been blessed with because of the Holocaust? Do I not, in part, feel that too?"* I could feel my own narrative bending, twisting, and evolving to incorporate this idea of strength and positivity.

Towards the end of the group, I decided to check in with the group, and returned to the uncertainty that Ilana had expressed at the beginning:

*Me: We've only got five minutes left... do you have more of a sense at what I'm aiming at with the questions today... about what this project is looking at?*

*Stephen: It's about our own...you know where we fit into this. We, you know, are important and the whole reason, the whole focus of this project of yours isn't the Holocaust, it isn't Holocaust survivors and it isn't second generation, it's third generation. That's different about it and what's our own unique perspectives and the way it affects us that is different to our parents or our grandparents. It's what's important so, yeah, I can totally see.*

*Lex: I'll be interested to see how you kind of weave in all the discussion points into the actual....*

*Me: ....Mm, me too! (Everyone giggled)*

### Focus Group Three

The last focus group took place on a cold day at the end of November. As I let myself in the garden gate using the set of keys given to me by the studio owner, I froze as her dog came bounding towards me, teeth bared and barking loudly, inches from my body. I stayed frozen for a couple of seconds, terrified, reminding myself that the aggression is all show, and no bite. My heart was still pounding in my chest but as I gained control of my faculties, I spoke softly to her and walked slowly and calmly toward the studio, all the while the dog followed me, barking loudly. I went inside and call the owner. She was away from London, and she apologised before telephoning her daughter to ask her to call the dog back into the house. She had forgotten about my group this evening. Once inside the studio I found that the four small electric heaters had not been turned on, and I could see my breath forming in the air in front of me. I turned on the little electric heaters, and hoped that the room would be warmed by the time people arrive.

By seven o'clock, everybody was present except for Stephen. I was unsure whether to wait, or start without him.

Me: *"... he (Stephen) has texted today saying 'see you later' but I don't want to keep you here later than need be, so we'll start and I'm sure he'll just come in and join us."*

Ilana: *"Do you get nervous that you text us in the week?"* (Giggles)

Lex: *"Like we'll forget"*

Me: *"Well, you never know! Assuming we've all got busy... What's it like that I text you?"*

Ilana: *"I don't know I just think that you get nervous that I've forgotten or something, and I'm like, don't worry! – I know, it's in my diary"* (giggles)

Ilana and Lex had noticed my anxiety that the focus group will slip from their minds.

Me: *"It is cold in here (then looking up at the thermostat) It's heated up, it's nearly 15' or 16' now"*

I felt cold, yet when I check the thermometer it was actually not that cold. What was the cold that I am feeling?

Ilana: *"I tend to find that these things get very hot though, and I don't really like it when it gets too hot."*

Me: *"I can watch the temperature and I can turn it down then..."*

Ilana: *"My house gets boiling, I can't bare it."*

I wondered what Ilana might have also been saying about the emotional 'heat' in her house. What couldn't she bare? When she remarked: *"I find these things get very hot,"* I imagined that she was also referring to the group, and I wondered about what it might have been in the last group that she could have experienced as having been emotionally 'hot' so that there was so much anxiety left over. Later on as I reviewed the transcript from the second group, I felt puzzled as I searched for clues in the narratives and was left wondering about what was unspoken in the room. I wondered whether there was a sense of foreboding as we were coming to the last focus group.

When I told Ilana that *"I can watch the temperature and turn it down"* I was also offering reassurance that I could contain the strong feelings and maintain safety.

Whilst we waited, still hoping that Stephen would arrive, Ilana asked me questions about my day; what time I arrived in the studio, and what I did there whilst I was waiting for the co-participants to arrive. I explained how I came face to face with the dog that day...

Me: *"Ilana I can see the fear in your face!"*

Ilana: *"I wouldn't have come! I have a fear of dogs. I've had therapy"*

Raphael: *"Really?! Bad experience as a child?"*

Ilana: *"Duno... No-one knows. I've just always been scared of dogs... I've nearly been attacked by a dog, but because I was running from it, it was horrible, you know Bull-dogs, and they're really horrible."*



Fear still seemed to be the dominant theme in the room. It seemed to be rather nameless and floating, and hard for me to pin down within any one narrative.

As the group discussion got going, the group (and the room) did seem to ‘warm up’ and the anxiety dissipate as people began to express themselves. I heard from Stephen that he would not make it, and we moved into the first exercise that day, which was to draw a picture of their connections with their survivor family members. Both Ilana and Lex represented family members as stick men, whereas Raphael drew a broken tree-stump to represent his family tree that had been severed by the holocaust. Lex commented on her surprise when she saw the stark and emotive image that Raphael had drawn:

*Lex: “I suppose shocking is too dramatic a word but almost like... I wouldn’t have thought that’s what you would have visualised.”*

Lex appeared to be surprised at how strong Raphael’s feelings were expressed through his drawing, I wondered about her disconnect from Raphael that seemed similar to my own struggle with staying connected to him at times. I wondered later how his sense of being literally severed from his family line was re-created for Raphael within the group too. Reflecting on his experience of the focus groups he expressed some disappointment:

*Raphael: “I think, for me, there’s not been much Holocaust involved in the sense that I don’t think we’ve really discussed the Holocaust, in depth... none of us actually said, or have spoken in depth about our family’s experiences. You know, I don’t really know your family history (talking to me). And I suppose, that’s what it means to me – it is about family history. And that’s what I missed getting out of it.”*

I wondered whether Raphael had hoped that hearing the histories of other families could make him feel more connected, with the group as well as with himself, but that he found the same feeling of disconnection mirrored within both my and Lex’s narratives, as neither of us were able to share the histories that he would have liked to hear.

Ilana also commented, when we met individually, on feeling separate and ‘other’ within the group, as she was the only one from a religious background. Ilana’s feeling of ‘otherness’ was particularly apparent when she described to us her experience with the Orthodox matchmaking site. She appeared to be self-conscious as she wondered if we will be able to understand her experience:

*Ilana: “You’ll laugh. I don’t know if you’ll understand it because of the world I’m coming from but” (giggles)...*

She told us about “*the stupid woman*” matchmaker who asked her friend if she was ‘obsessed’ with the holocaust. Raphael gave Ilana the following feedback:

*Raphael: I don’t think I would want to be seeing anything about the Holocaust on it... I don’t think I would want to know. I think I would be pretty disturbed that someone had, I’d want to know more about you as a woman, not so much that your main interest is in this area of history. I’m not criticising that by the way...”*

*Ilana: “Don’t worry...”*

*Raphael: “It’s um, I’d be a little disturbed... I can understand this lady’s curiosity or critique of it. I can empathise with it, because I... It’s just not something you’d want to see on there...”*

As we ended the final focus group, Ilana told us of a conversation she’d had earlier that evening. Her brother had asked her whether she felt that she is representative of the third generation, and in response she wondered about what or who they were really representing. *“I think it’s interesting that all four of us, on the street, we wouldn’t know each other’s stories but already there’s so much that ties us together.”*

Raphael and Lex also both noticed how they had all come from different backgrounds and had vastly different experiences to recount. Raphael reflected upon having enjoyed seeing the common threads that tied everyone together; *“It’s nice to feel that connection.”* As we came to the end of the final group, Raphael expressed his sadness that the group was ending: *“For me I’ve actually quite enjoyed coming here recently.”*

## **Appendix 6: Example Transcript of Focus Group Two**

Focus Group Two – 9/10/16

Transcript

Ilana: Are those things for this group? (Pointing to the 'objects' I have left out.

Emily: Yes, they are. You can have a look if you like... we may not use them today; we might use them next time. They are just some objects that I have collected, and others have helped me to collect, that... sometimes, when we talk about things like the Holocaust, we might not have words for the things that we are wanting to express, or the things that just don't have words. So sometimes it is useful to have objects to represent things, to hold, and to talk around something. So, we are definitely going to use them next time, but I put them there today just in case we might use them today. You are welcome to go and have a look at what they are...

Raphael: Familiarisation!

Emily: Yes (laughing)

Stephen: At one of my first sessions of bereavement counselling I turned up and on the table there was a bunch of paper and pencils and pens, and I came in and made the joke: "Ah are those for me?" And she said very flatly, "yes". (Everyone laughs) I totally presumed it was for the previous or the next person but "ok, oh, alright, what do you want me to do?" "Whatever you want to do" (Lex laughs loudly – nervous?) Doodle away, draw something,

Emily: It can be quite strange, can't it?

Stephen: mmmm

Emily: When you're not used to...

Stephen: A return to childhood... or expressing yourself creatively

Emily: And some people like that, or it fits for them, and for some they prefer words. Okay, we're early but we can start. The only thing I'd say is can we turn our phones off or on aeroplane mode? The only thing is I noticed on the first recording that there was some interference, but it could have been mine because mine was on.

Ilana: Mine is already off. (Giggles)

Stephen: Did you get all of it?

Emily: Yes I did I did

Stephen: Do you transcribe it yourself or do you have software that does it?

Emily: I do it myself. I'm quite lucky that I'm quite a fast typer, I don't know why. Also, you think about it quite a lot when you're typing it because you're going through the words quite slowly so lots comes to you. Whereas if someone else did it, or your used software you might miss some nuances. Don't have that time to think about it

Stephen: It's like you're processing it in a fairly solid way

Emily: Yeah, it was really interesting, quite a lot came up in last time and we shared a lot of interesting ideas. How did you all find it?

Ilana: I just hope we're helpful for you, for your work

Emily: Ahh thank you. You are, absolutely there are lots of things coming up. You must be feeling that pressure then as well?

Ilana: I don't really understand it

Emily: Ok, ok, maybe we can think more about...maybe today the questions we are thinking about will be clearer...

Ilana: I don't mind, I just hope it's helpful

Emily: It is, absolutely. I just wanted to remind you as well, that it can be like a bit of a conversation, like for example, you said about not understanding – we can kind of stop and have a chat about what we've been talking about and if its useful for all of us. I guess the course and my research I want it to be helpful but also I want it to be interesting and helpful in some way to all of us. I think we're probably all come for different reasons as well so we can stop and talk about that at any point. Please talk to each other and again it's not about agreement it's just about different experiences and different thoughts about this stuff. And again, I'd like to hear from everyone, so if someone hasn't spoken I might ask you. So, we'll go to 9 again. So this is a bit of an ice-breaker in a way a way to get your minds engaged again in the topic – not only in the factual way but in the emotional way and to start to feel our way in this area. So I'd like you all to please think – (sorry before we start, does anyone want a comfort break? You've all got drinks?) – To think of a place or an object or a photograph from your past that connects you somehow to the relative or relatives that survived the holocaust. So it could be a place they liked or lived in or visited. Something they gave you or left you or a photograph you have of them. Once you have that object and memory in mind, I'm going to ask you to describe it to the group in as much detail as you can and if it gives you any feelings or sensations or anything like that you might have about it. You may like to use one of the objects I've got over there to just hold in your hand to talk about it. If you feel that it fits. If you find it hard to

describe an object, you could just describe the person themselves – the characteristics and how you feel about them.

I'll leave you for a moment or two...

Emily: If anyone would like to start...?

Stephen: A place, a picture or an object you say?

Emily: Yeah, it could really be any of those or a person. Something familiar to you...

Stephen: Um I think it's a photograph but I'm not very good at describing photographs. It's a photograph of my grandfather, grinning happily with my mum and my aunt but the next best is his house in Haifa I went to seven or eight times. Erm, very Israeli 50s – don't know if any of you knows what that means. Kiriyat near Haifa, fifteen minutes on the train, after Haifa from Tel Aviv. Erm, Modern train station but as soon as you get off its all kind of dated – 60s and 70s for the most part. Again, I'm not too good at describing what I can see in my head. I wish I was better but.... For me that's Israel and that's in Tel Aviv between the two of them those are the 2 places I strongly associate with Israel. There was the house – I can't remember if it's the house my mum grew up in. I don't think it was, but it was nearby and it's a five to ten-minute walk from the train station. It was a top floor flat with overgrown gardens and lots of stray cats nearby. I can't describe the sensation of what its like, this place but it's like a civilised middle east – maybe that strikes a chord – and there was a bete avon serviette dispenser on the table and a chequered red and white plastic table cloth and I spent lots of time there when on holiday but I don't remember doing very much there. I was always very bored watching the TV that my grandfather and his wife – so my mother's father and step mum – my mum was in her 30s I think when they married but....I remember sitting there awkwardly and my grandfather was also awkwardly sitting there. And we'll find something to watch together which would be the football usually and we'd exchange the occasional words, either in English or Hebrew. Usually it would be to work out what the country was because it was international football coz I was always there in the summer so it was some World Cup or European Cup and he'd say like "Svetzia" and I was like, oh Sweden – and that was like our moment of minimal communication and he'd have this smile that – you could see that smile and you would want that moment to continue – but that would sort of be it.. I was between six and twelve. Usually I think from memory, and I was even more awkward than he was. I didn't even know what to do or say in this situation. I remember my grand-step-mum, if that's what you call her – Alina I think and I made the point to my mum – she was one of these people who had pointy fingers – I don't know if anyone has seen someone with pointy fingers? They're usually old people or Chinese people or Asian

people. Whereas we have rounded fingers, they almost have points like claws – am I making sense to anyone?

Ilana: Is it their nails?

Stephen: No, they're not though. It's not nails, it's kind of their fingers themselves. They're not actual points but they're pointy a little bit. I wouldn't say she freaked me out but she made me uncomfortable. I made the point to my Mum because obviously I didn't know her very well – and obviously Mum knew her and her relationship with my grandfather. I asked "is she...?" I can't remember how I put it but I hinted at the idea that she was kind of in it for the money, and she was a little bit of a gold digger - not that my grandfather had money but he was getting money from the German government and he owned this flat, so, my mum confirmed "yes" – sorry I've diverted a bit from place but that was my memories of my interactions with my grandfather – the majority of them anyway.

Emily: I really heard those moments of connection when you both got the same country and smiled compared to the almost witchy – slightly scary fingers of your step grandmother, sort of...thank you...

Ilana: When I was younger my grandparents have a flat in Israel and we always stayed there. One time, my grandparents were there, they lived in England, well, my grandfather lives in England now because my grandmother passed away – we were all there together – my family and my grandparents in the flat and we went to this concert. I don't remember how old I was, I must have been eleven or something but I remember I needed the bathroom and my mum was just like "okay, wait until we get home" but my grandmother was like "okay, let's just go and find one" and she took me, you know Jerusalem? King George Street? The Three Kings Hotel? So she took me there, it was like a walk, I don't know where we were, erm and then she just said "oh. This is where me and Sabba", Sabba is how you say grandfather in Hebrew, she said "this is where we met so whenever I walk past, and I walk past there a lot because it's very near to the flat – that's kinda a central area in Jerusalem so now whenever I walk past the hotel I think, oh that is where Sabba and Safta met. Which is quite cute.

Emily: What is the place like?

Ilana: The Hotel?

Emily: Mm

Ilana: Um, I've only ever been in the lobby bit. It's like a normal lobby. It's not so lavish but it's not so gross either. They just have rounded seats but it's all pleasant and nice.

Emily: What sort of feelings do you have about it? You're smiling as you describe...

Ilana: It's just comical, it's just funny because my Grandmother wasn't such a light-hearted person; it's just funny "oh this is where Sabba and I met". It was cute that she told me. And I was bursting, that's why I remember

Emily: You look at it and think about it...

Ilana: It's just a cute memory

Emily: Thank you

Lex: I saw the conkers over there on that table and that made me remember. So, my grandparents lived on Dollis Hill and I associate that place so heavily with them now. I used to go pretty much religiously, every weekend if not every other weekend. And they lived in a house there and they never did anything to the house so it was sort of still in the 1920s state with maybe a few modern sofas in it. But my dad, when he was a kid planted a conker in the garden at the back of the garden and then it grew into an absolutely huge oak tree about five metres tall kind of thing, and then every Autumn, roughly around this time of year it used to shed literally all the conkers onto the lawn and I remember as a kid I used to collect them and I remember grandpa had built this shed at the back of the garden and then we would collect them all and have conker fights at the back of the garden.

Emily: Oh, I never knew that actually worked if you plant a conker it grows into an oak tree... so quite a playful memory

Lex: Neither did I actually! That time of year and the conkers, that was a playful time of year



## Appendix 7: Example of Coding from MAXQDA Software - Raphael

analysis.mxl2 - MAXQDA 12 (Release 12.3.6)

Tables Analysis Mixed Methods Visual Tools Reports Help

Document Browser: Raphael every comment without table

10 And it was our last day and we were coming home, and we were in Luxor airport, and (Nessy?) was a really, really good looking girl, she was only nineteen or twenty at the time, and this sleazy Egyptian soldier came over and he was like "Oh come with me pretty lady, I'll open up a new queue for you" and um, she said "Well I'm here with my boyfriend, you know, we want to stay together for the flight" "Oh no, no, he can come too". And so they saw her name, and she's got a really English name, so, she got waved through. And I came up Benjamin Klarrman, he was like "have you been to Israel?" You know, "where's your family from," "Who's your..."

11 No, no stamps in the passport, because obviously if you go to Israel they won't stamp your passport, if you want them not to. And um,

12 So, I had big, big problems, got taken to an interview suite, and I was kept for about half an hour. And I kept thinking oh god I'm going to end up in Cairo prison central or something

13 Oh it was very frightening. 'Cos they were asking, you know, you must be Jewish with a name like this, and, you know, you must be working for Mossad. And I'm thinking, oh my God, I'm thinking, I'm English! I'm English! (Emphasis on the second English). And they eventually let me go, and I got walked onto the plane itself and sat on my chair, and I was fastening up my buttons, fast as I can, thinking "you're not getting me off this plane now" and then the guard leaned forward and he just said "don't ever come back to Egypt"... so

14 So, I thought hoooh

15 Yeah, I think they must just be paranoid, and seeing the name they just think...

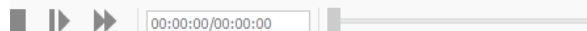
16 Aggressive

17 Yeah, just based on the name, literally just based on the name. And I had a similar experience in Germany, when I was coming back from visiting my aunt. And um, it was just after 9/11, and, cos it was November, and, security at the airport just got ramped up, you know we were used to sauntering through, a quick scan, it was now going through body pat-downs and you know

18 Everyone was on heightened alert, and anyway so he, this guy, this big fat German guy at the border control, he's like waving a scanner over me, and its gone 'beep beep beep' around my neck. So he said "oh, what do you have?" And so I showed him the chain, and said "Oh, I've got a necklace on, as you can see." "No, no, no, no, I must see it. I must see it." So I pulled it out, and obviously it's a star of David. So anyway, he went "Oh, you can go through." So as I walked through, I heard him say - and I speak very good German - I heard him say, in

Simple Coding Query (OR combination of codes)

17:19 17/07/2019



**Document Browser: Raphael every comment without table**

Reflecting on 2nd ...Lack of a story ...Shame ...Guilt Reflecting on 2nd ... Reflecting on 2nd gene ... ..Learning about th Reflecting on 2nd ... ..Anger ..the brick wall ... ..Anger ..the brick wall ... ..Grief/loss ...Curious/wantin ...the brick wall

51 um, my mother told me. Because we were always told as children that he died of cancer, and I think that was probably a way that my father, I think he felt very embarrassed about it, very ashamed, uh, and had a lot of emotional issues surrounding the death of his father, and I think he felt very guilty over it because my grandfather was basically writing begging letters to my father, and he said, look, I'm sending you my gold watch, I'm sending you rings, you know, any jewelry he had, and he said 'I need you to give this to your uncle, my grandfather's brother who was naturalized into a British citizen, and he said, you need to get Herbert to liquidate these, I need the money, I need to pay for your sisters, um... because my father then has two half-sisters in Germany. He said I need to make sure that they are, their school fees are paid, and that their German national insurance is paid, their 'stamp' is paid, and I think my father ignored a lot of these letters because he didn't know what to do, I mean he was only in his, eh, he was about your age (A?), you know, twenty one, and he, even though he was married with a young son, he was, you know, being asked to cope with a very heavy responsibility via, basically an absentee parent

52 No, no, no, no, no, this was my oldest brother, there's quite a gap between us, erm, and so, but going back towards the Holocaust, um, my father got schooled in it when he would go and visit and live in Germany in the summers usually, and he was taken to erm, his first ever synagogue experience was as a six or seven year old in Dusseldorf and being taken to what had been our family shul, erm, which was now just ruins, you know, a burnt out, bombed out, wreck of a building but there was still a very small community, um, you know pressing religion at this site, and my father being shown - these are things he's told me - but, my grandfather would, um, show him old records saying 'oh well that's your great grandmother' or 'that's your great-grandfather' and 'this is where they died' and being, and this is what's always stuck with me, that the Nazis had put all the death certificates 'died of typhoid' 'died of typhoid' whereas really, you know, many of them died in concentration camps and ghettos across Europe. So, for me it became, erm, I felt really angry that I couldn't trace my father's father's, father's, so my great grandfather, in the male line, I couldn't trace back past my great-grandfather. And I've searched everywhere, on all different records, because of the name change as well...

53 It's, you know, it's nigh on impossible; where do you start? And I feel really angry that I can't research, or I don't know where I'm from, other than one town in Poland, you know, where my Grandfather (muffled).. What were his parents' names? What did they do? You know, where did they come from? You know... Whereas my mother's side in England, I can get back to about 1450. But, I feel really angry, that obviously, you know, being in the male line, and having this name, I can't take it back anywhere. And that really, I find quite upsetting.

54 Yeah, that's it, it's like literally running into a brick wall. And you can't, how do you get through this brick wall? Where do you start? What do

Simple Coding Query (OR combination of codes)

17:21 17/07/2019

## Appendix 8: Example of Coded Segments - Lex

Code	Segment
Adaptation post-holocaust\Life-themes\Assimilation/minimising difference	<p>my surname now, my married name is Stanton, so my husband's family were originally called Steingold, but when they came to the UK they changed it to be Stanton so it was less obviously Jewish, um, and then, my original surname is Inow, which came from, which was, Inowratzola, which is the original name, and it comes, it is a Polish town, and then my grandfather shortened it down because it was twelve letters and now it is only four, which is still long enough to have to spell to someone. There are all sorts of weird and wonderful pronunciations of it. I decided to change my name because I have a brother who will carry it on, and I was actually secretly quite happy to get rid of it. So, yeah, that's my name.</p>
Knowing/not-knowing\Family silence\Lack of a story\Lack of detail in narrative	<p>Um so I drew a family tree, I drew my paternal side, because that is the side that came out of Germany. Um, so both of my grandparents came over at different times, they came separately and then met in the UK both as survivors so they kind of built this community when they got to the UK, but my grandfather came over, he got out of a camp, and then managed to make his way over here, but then his, one of his sisters' they kind of all dispersed as a family, so just after Kristallnacht, so one of them went over, his sister went over to Sweden and then made it over to Palestine and then my other great aunt was on the Kinder transport as well. And then when my Grandpa and great Aunt came to the UK they stayed with various relatives that were, some were in London and some were outside of London and then they kind of came back together again in London, um, and that's when he met my Grandma, so yeah.</p>

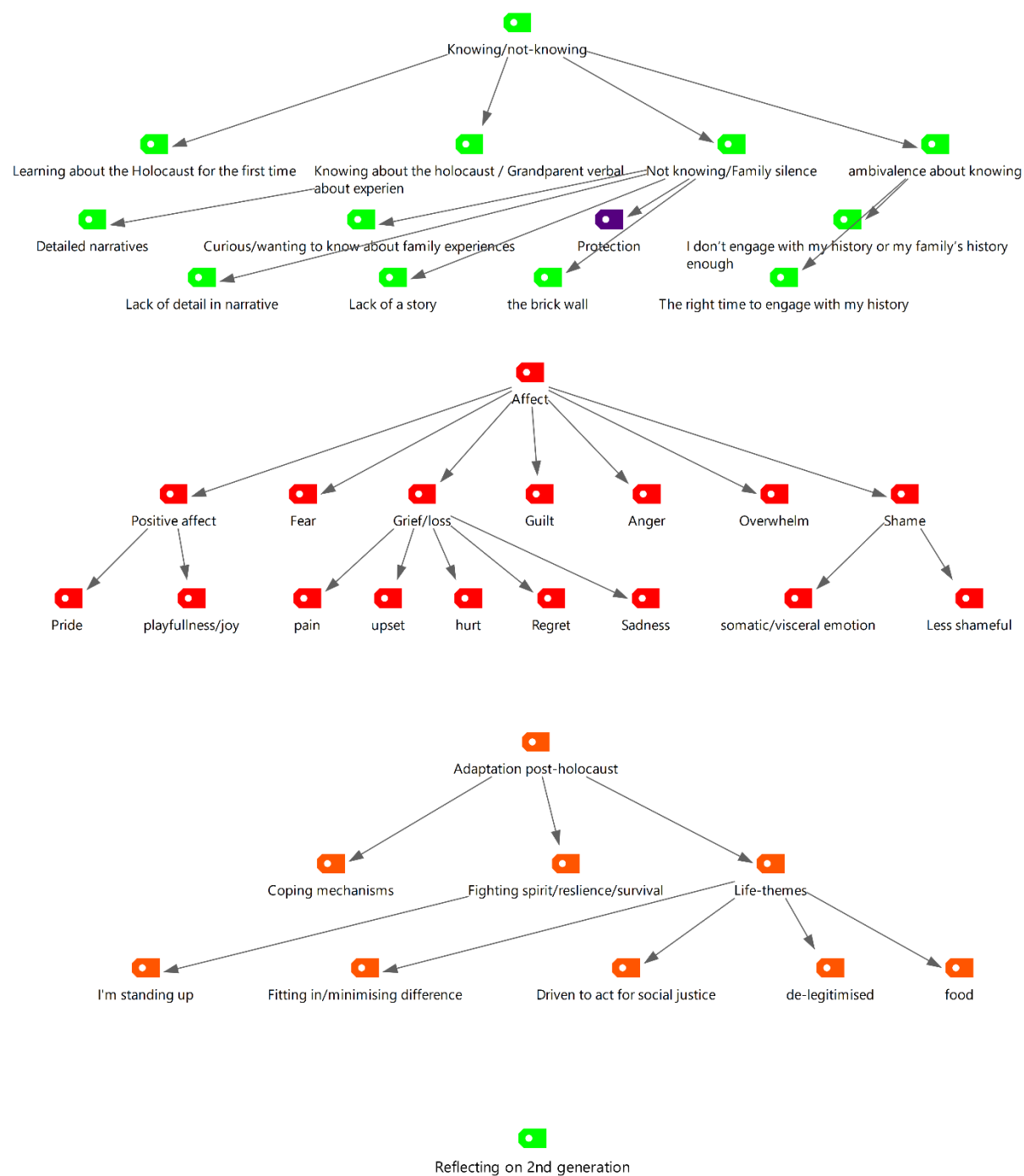
<p>Positive impact of history\Making meaning from survivor experience\Resilience of survivors</p>	<p>Um so I drew a family tree, I drew my paternal side, because that is the side that came out of Germany. Um, so both of my grandparents came over at different times, they came separately and then met in the UK both as survivors so they kind of built this community when they got to the UK, but my grandfather came over, he got out of a camp, and then managed to make his way over here, but then his, one of his sisters' they kind of all dispersed as a family, so just after Kristallnacht, so one of them went over, his sister went over to Sweden and then made it over to Palestine and then my other great aunt was on the Kinder transport as well. And then when my Grandpa and great Aunt came to the UK they stayed with various relatives that were, some were in London and some were outside of London and then they kind of came back together again in London, um, and that's when he met my Grandma, so yeah.</p>
<p>Relationship to Holocaust history\Relationship with survivors\duty/obligation to survivor relatives</p>	<p>they weren't kind of the most paternal, like, yeah paternal grandparents, um, but, I think it was kind of, it was interesting for them to obviously find their place within the British community and be part of London, but yeah, no. I was close to them, but not, it was almost duty-bound relationship so uhhh</p>
<p>Positive impact of history\regeneration/growth\playfullness/joy</p>	<p>when we were kids she would always take us out, and so she was more the kind of fun-loving one, who would want to go and explore with us when we were younger, and take us to fun places so I've kinda got a more positive relationship off her and what we used to do, and then her, the other sister who lived in Israel, who only died recently, would be about 96, um, whenever she used to come over she was unbelievably intelligent and spoke, you know, half a dozen languages and would always kind of spend time with us, she again, had a really positive relationship with us</p>

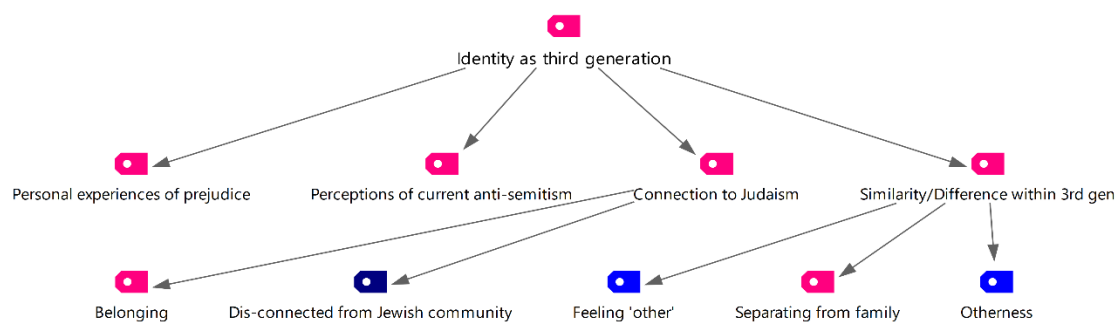
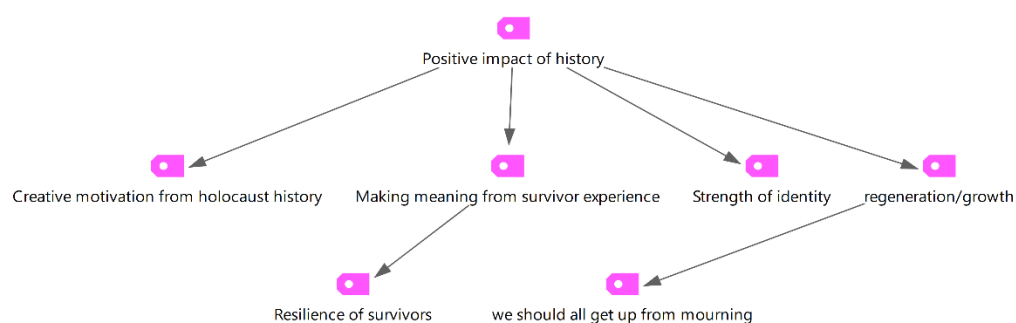
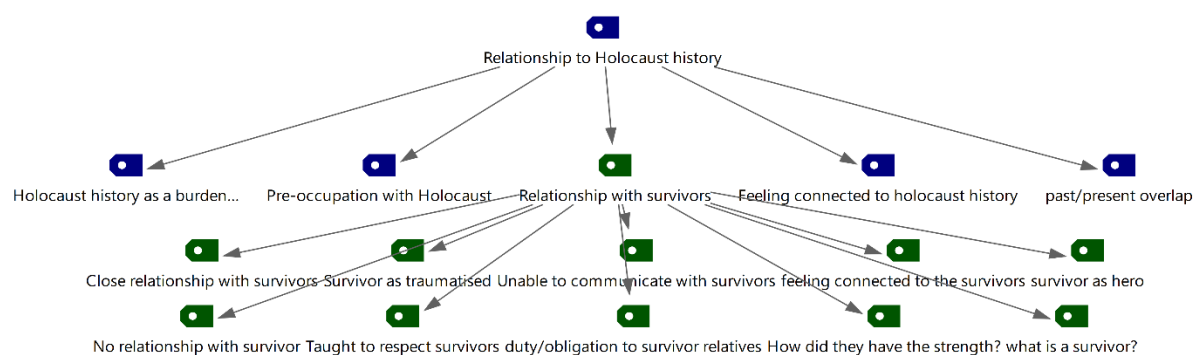
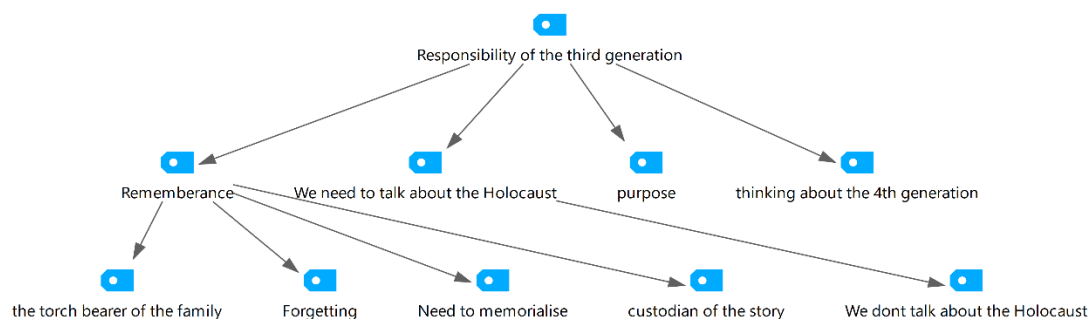
## Appendix 9: Table of Themes and Categories

THEMES	CATEGORIES	CO-PARTICIPANTS	EXAMPLE CODES
1. Affect	Positive affect	Ilana, Lex, Raphael	Proud of Grandparents Joy/playfulness
	Anger	Ilana, Raphael, Stephen	Fantasies of violence
	Fear	Ilana, Lex, Raphael, Stephen	'That stuff is really scary'
	Grief/Loss		
	Shame		
	Guilt		
	Overwhelm		"It's just too much"
2. Knowing/not knowing	Knowing / Grandparents verbal about experiences	Raphael	Curious about family history
	Learning about the Holocaust for the first time		'Filling in the gaps'
	Ambivalence about knowing	Lex, Stephen	'I don't engage with my history enough'
	Not knowing / family silence	Ilana, Lex, Raphael, Stephen	Lack of story 'It's about protection'
3. Responsibility of the third generation	Remembrance	Ilana, Lex, Raphael, Stephen	Custodian of the story' Forgetting the past
	We need to talk about the holocaust	Ilana, Lex, Raphael	'We don't talk about the holocaust enough'
	Thinking about a fourth generation	Lex, Raphael, Stephen	
	Living with Purpose	Ilana, Lex	
4. Relationship with holocaust history	Relationship with survivors	Ilana, Lex, Raphael, Stephen	Close relationship with survivors Duty/obligation to survivors Survivor as hero
		Ilana	
	Holocaust history as a burden Pre-occupation with the	Ilana, Stephen Ilana,	



## Appendix 10: Creative Coding Map





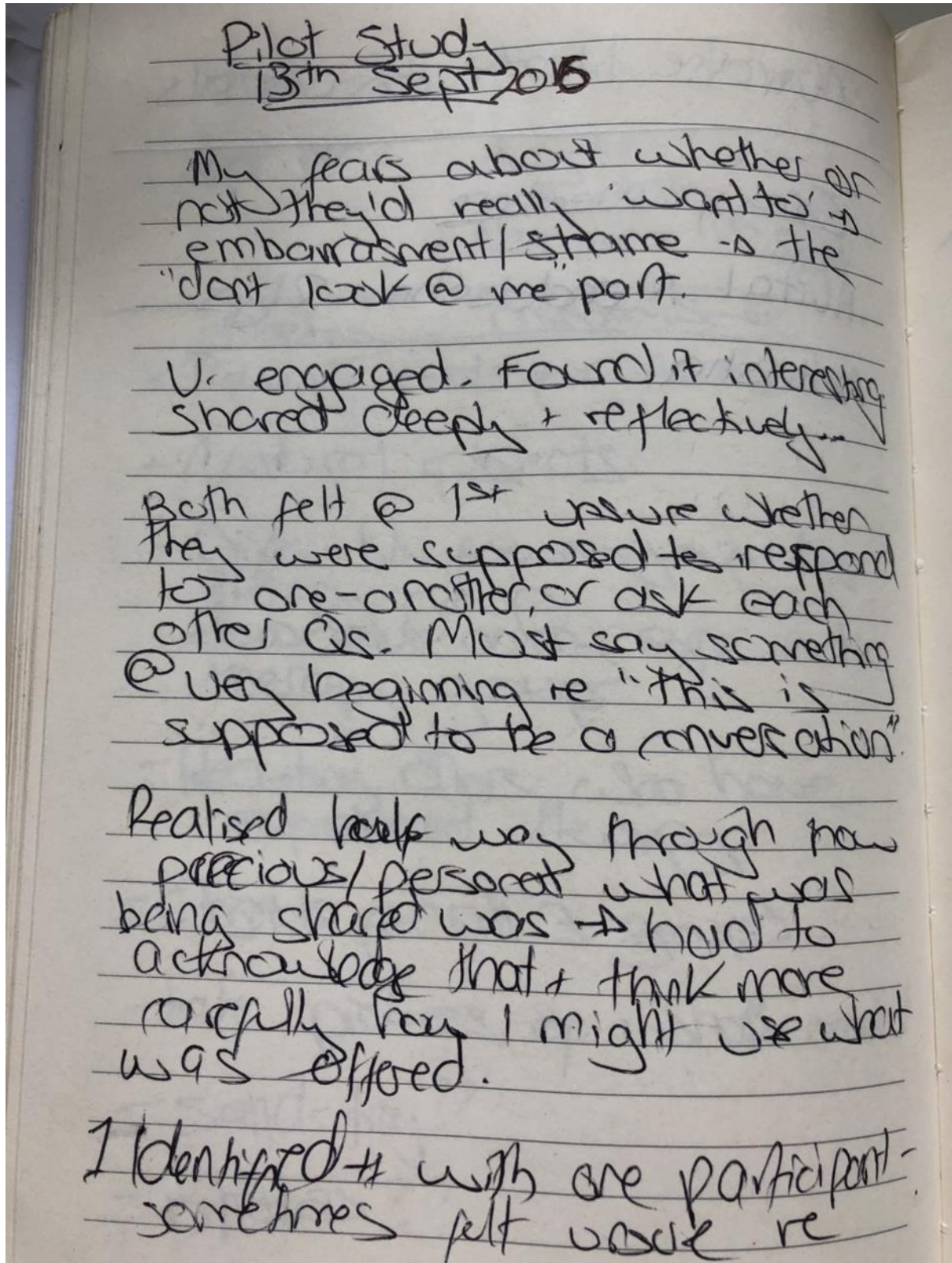


**Appendix 11: Table Showing the Frequency of Themes Relating to Each Co-participant**

	Raphael	Stephen	Lex	Ilana
Adaptation post-Holocaust	4	7	2	6
Affect	10	9	4	8
Identity as third generation	8	6	7	9
Knowing/not knowing	8	7	7	7
Positive impact of Holocaust history	3	0	5	7
Relationship to Holocaust history	8	6	5	10
Responsibility of the Third Generation	6	5	9	5
Reflection on the Second Generation	1	1	0	0

## Appendix 12: Reflective Field Notes

Notes Following pilot study, Sept 2016:



how much to say about that  
in the moment - to allow for  
the diff to come out to..

Found I focussed primarily  
on facilitating / listening / asking  
it was almost too much to  
think about to report on  
my own stories. At times  
I started, in order to give examples  
that might evoke the ps to  
think of their own answers...  
but this was different to really  
being involved in my own  
process.

Will I have capacity to do  
both?! - may have to play  
this by ear.

Realised if I loved in drawing  
picture diagram, I would  
be able to do it "fresh" in the  
real focus group. So I decided  
not to do it.

\* Also need to remember to



say that things might come  
up + to take care of  
themselves. say only as  
much as they feel comfortable  
to.

### Themes

Not being clear on the story  
of the g-parents, + shame  
around that "I should know"  
"I should get this right"  
"I rang my mum this morning to  
ask where he was born."

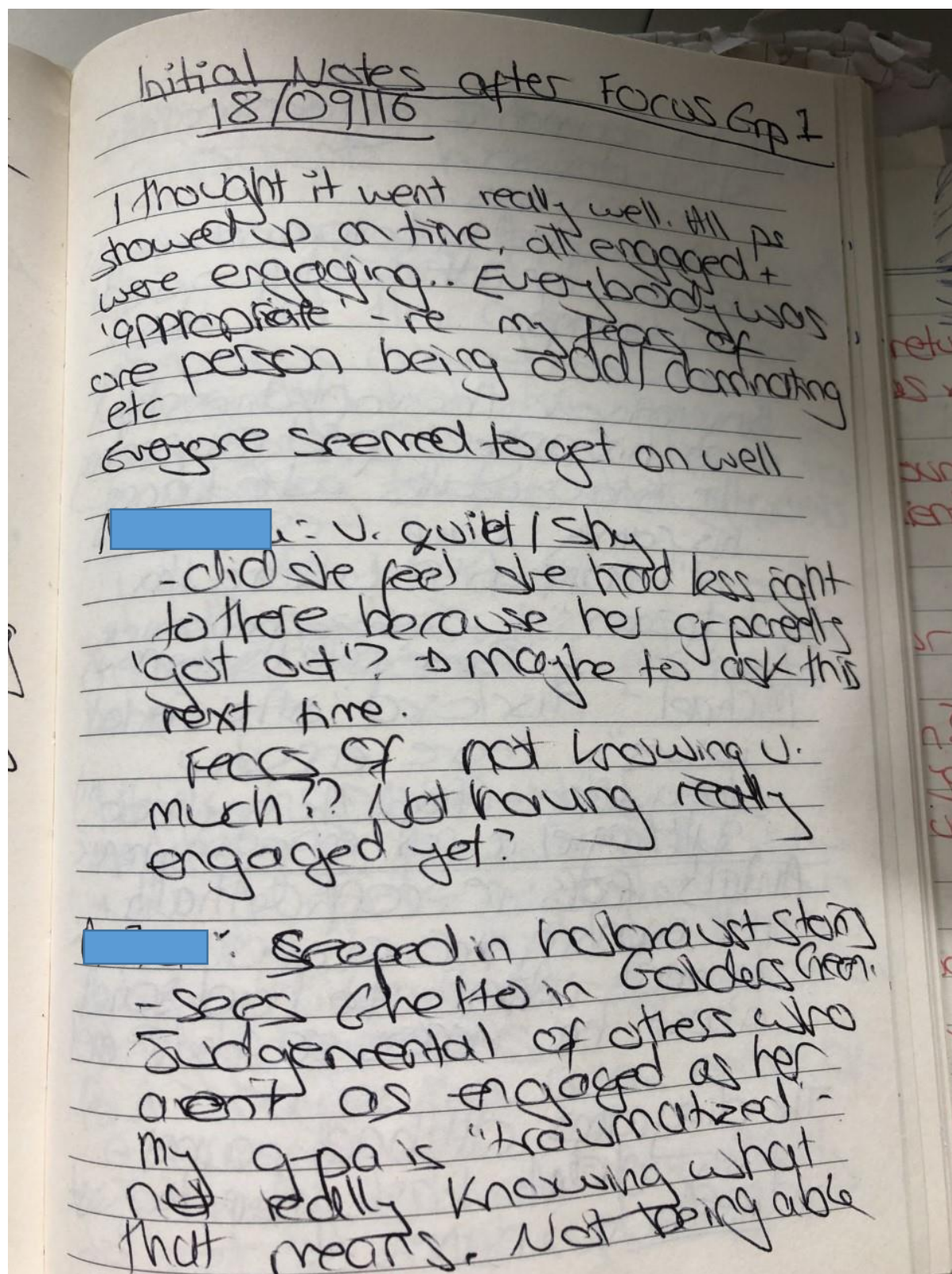
Confusion... re narrative  
no clear narrative.

2nd hand info, nothing being  
directly related to them from  
g-parents.

Not being able to relate "in  
any meaningful way to  
g-parents"

The closest side - non-thinking side  
of my family

Notes after Focus Group One:





to correct a grandmother's  
shut-down...

Youngress...

Preoccupied by holocaust... knew  
names of all the diff. guards  
in a camp.

[redacted] - v. thoughtful, insightful  
re his anger / upset @ finding  
the brick walls when hearing  
his family back.

"I can't find where I'm  
from..."

Greenpeace / political  
- ~~some~~ linked somehow.

[redacted] - disclosed "other mental  
issues"... more emotive

language - (had therapy before!!)

guilt / regret re not engaging, have

[redacted] fears re. confidentiality +  
not wanting her grandmother  
to read what she had said  
about her. Reassured a bit @ end

The diagrams all had names.  
Why didn't I ask them to just  
disclose names?!

bring everyone in..

I feel a found a balance in sharing from my own process & facilitating - felt quite natural.

Def need more spaces next time though..

Some sig. b/w my worries about having enough food out, + the conv. re. food + wasting food / eating fast before the kottaks come. But actually nobody really ate.. sig?

Thing about Shiva + getting up from mourning = u interesting. Telling stories for 70 days (7 days) → mourning period. Is our gen. working out how to get up again?

Do some feel fear that if we 'get up' we will forget, like any survivor feels



guilt when they start to  
forget when they resume  
living'...

Idea of our group being the  
last link - what responsibility  
+ a ~~time~~ ~~time~~ ~~time~~ creates? or is it  
an opportunity that we don't  
want to waste? To do the  
work of mourning/ending  
mourning

How to bring the Jewish ppl  
out of mourning... do we  
want to?

For next session, can refer back  
to ~~the~~ mention of her dist;  
~~the~~ mention of starting to  
want to know more; Michael's  
mention of his political activism;  
~~the~~ mention of his work  
facing his ancestors?.

Feeling of warmth in room,  
commonality, a common purpose



## Initial Notes During 1st Full Listening To Recording of Focus Grp 1

■ - telling me stories of exps of anti-Semitism in Egypt + Germany airports  
When ■ comes in, he is v. talkative immediately + ■ goes quiet.

■ - referring to living in the 'ghetto'  
- Being stung by wasps twice!

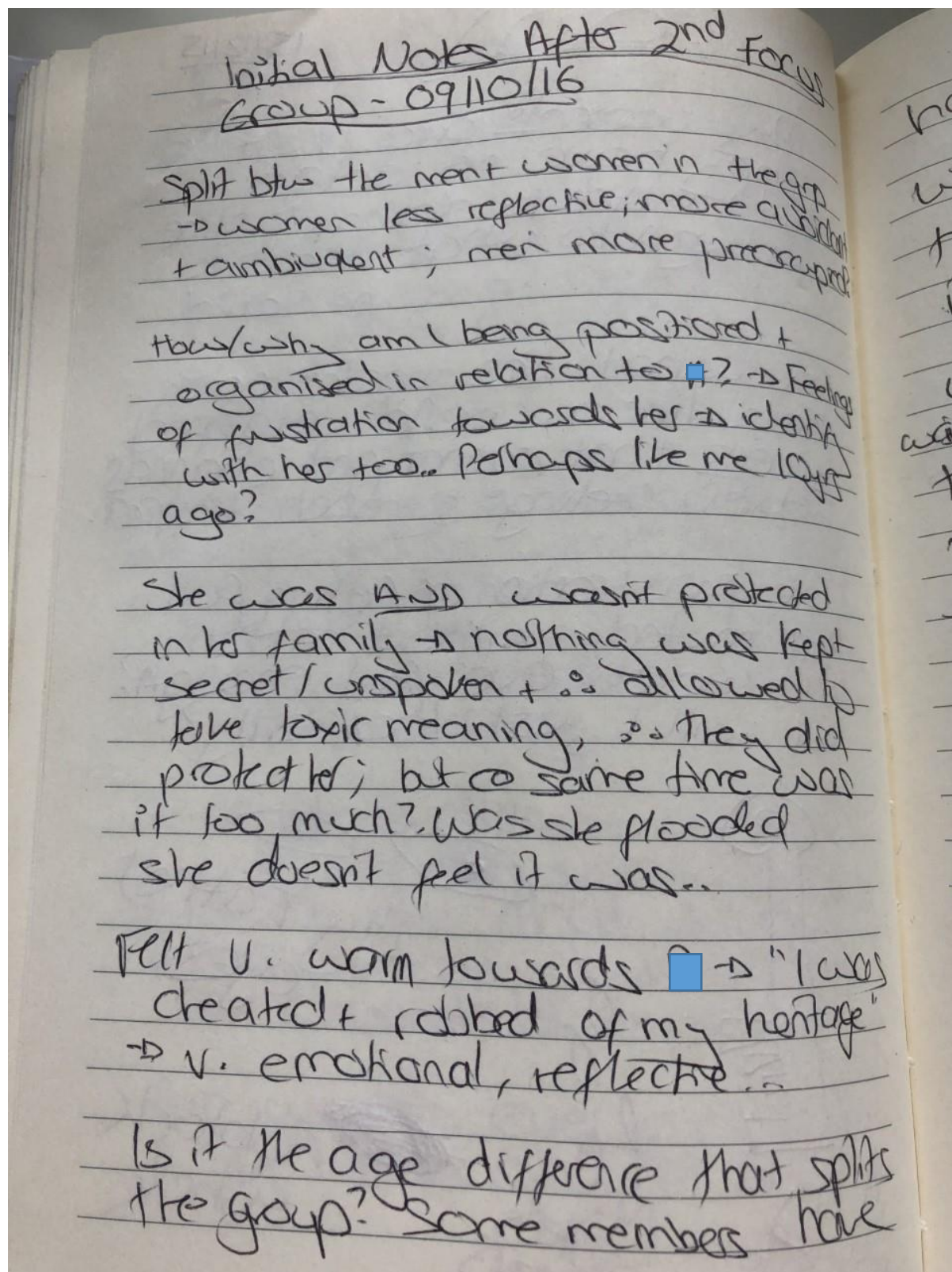
■ - Holocaust stories called ■  
"not a lot of breath..."

■ - spks without breathing  
"If u go up for air u get shot"  
she replicates the breathlessness

I felt defensive re ■'s attack on "idiots" that don't know... but upon listening, I realize I have also shared her frustration w ppl who won't / can't engage w the Holocaust + also what about As envy for this "idiot" who hadn't had to listen to hear him his whole childhood...

Jan 21.

Notes after focus group two:





had longer to reflect.

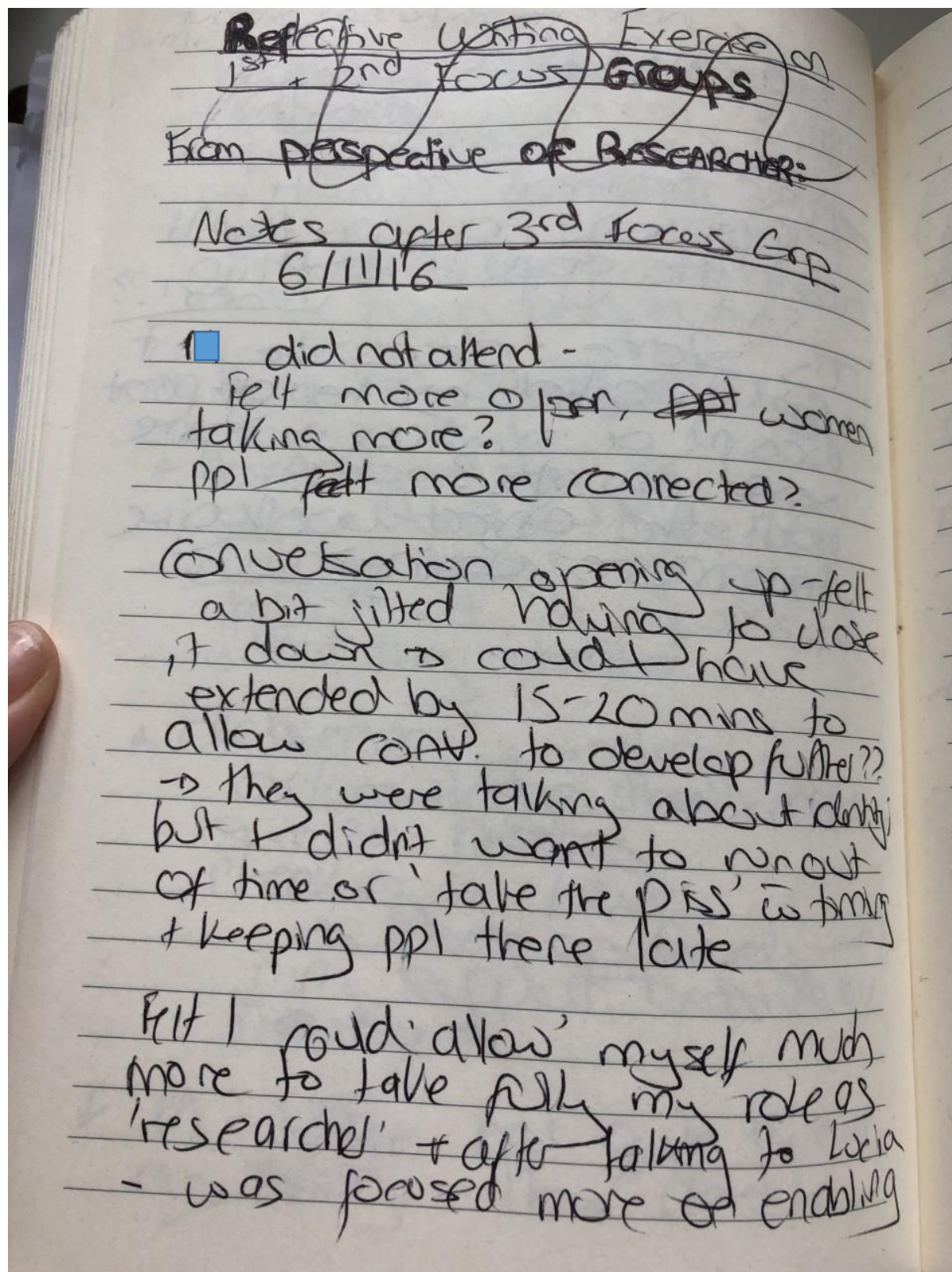
Why do I position myself away from the 'strength' that G.A. feel that they are "blessed" with because of the Holocaust?

Do I not, in part, feel that too? Why focus on the pathology; wasn't that my conclusion from the lit. review of my proposal..

Integrating I felt a bit like I can sometimes feel in my family; trying to push / poke / prod ppl to 'go there' + acknowledge the darker bits, but these 2 women wouldn't / couldn't...  
→ What was I looking for? My agenda?

- For A and for B: survivor guilt literature will be important.

Notes after focus group three:





+ facilitating...  
 trusting ppl to respond to  
 each other worked well.

V. moved by [redacted] + his 'tree'  
 picture... he was v. open,  
 emotive

At end he said to me "don't think  
 I was a victim. I gave it back  
 some - I'm no victim!"  
 → v. imp for me to know  
 that.

V. interesting re his g-pa  
 → victim - shame - being 'broken'  
 ...

Lovey text from [redacted] - lovely to  
 see that someone else found  
 some use in the group, other  
 than just me.  
 V. validating.

SPV w Lucia

25/02/17

- my project is a snap-shot  
in time of the constructing  
of narratives

→ this is an ongoing  
process that the members  
I will be continuing with,  
but @ time of project it is  
about ~~constructing~~ I have, this  
far, constructed my narrative,  
but I don't need to put it in  
there, in the project

→ this is the loss for me, it  
for [ ] in the app. - Next step  
would be ~~what~~ filling some  
of those gaps where possible

This research is about those  
gaps - rather than filling them  
& the "urge" & "wish" to fill them  
rather than trying to do it

Project = a representation of the  
process / phenomena of  
feeling the gaps / wanting to  
fill it rather than doing



## Reflective Journal 04/04/18

Reading example autoethnography  
 - ~~re~~ ~~emphasize~~ the impact of writing  
 so intimately about authors own  
 experience of illness. Vulnerability, emotion.  
 How much intimacy will there / can  
 there be as my research + stories  
 have some removal from the original  
 experiences.. and I don't perhaps  
 ask quite enough about their own  
 individual exps..

Stanzas instead of quotations?  
 Aesthetically pleasing..  
 (Emmett powerpoint slides)

Need to focus + re-focus on myself  
 + my p's ~~as~~ experiences, so that  
 they don't get lost as mere  
 "carriers" or "scribes" as Tash puts  
 it → what about them as inds  
 experiencing themselves in their family  
 worlds...

Need to pull out stories..

15/06/18

I am realising now, as I have just begun to have some more intensive, joined-up time to write + read, how important self-care + pacing is going to be. Now if I need to dip in + out, that's important to allow myself, room to breathe

to let joy + laughter in  
to have 'Holocaust-free' days. Even if the project is in my mind, to try to focus on other areas of my life.

Now I have the extension, I have time not to rush. To enjoy my kids, to look after myself.

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

If I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

-Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14